

**INTERPRETING THE IDEOLOGICAL EVOLUTION OF AN INSURGENCY:
LESSONS FROM THE NORTH CAUCASUS, 2007-2015**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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January 2019

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Ideology has fallen badly out of fashion. In the study of political violence in particular, it is often pushed to the margins, and there is considerable scepticism over its importance. Yet violent political actors often devote substantial effort to shaping interpretations of their activities, and explanatory models that neglect ideology typically rely on a narrow understanding of the concept and leave important questions about its role unanswered. This thesis interrogates ideology's role in political violence through a rich empirical study of the insurgency that operated in Russia's North Caucasus between 2007 and 2015. It applies Social Movement Theory to unique datasets to understand how movement actors defined the conflicts they were engaged in and sought to persuade others to participate, and how internal and external contexts influenced these ideas. In doing so, it establishes the insurgency as ideologically shallow and weakly integrated, and argues that identity and pragmatism were more central to its ideological vision than specific grievances or goals. This thesis significantly advances our understanding of the insurgency and generates important insights into the role of ideology in political violence more broadly. At the same time, it contributes important methodological innovations to the study of clandestine social movements.

To my wonderful wife, Julia, who brings light to the search for meaning.

Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to a great many people and organizations, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. To Julia and Charlie, for creating the loving and supporting environment in which I have worked. To Ces and Derek, who have provided guidance and support throughout, and who were the best supervisors anyone could hope for. To the UK's Economic and Social Research Council, for the financial support that made this project feasible. To the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Royal United Services Institute, for their invaluable help in securing that support. To the many, many people who shared their time, experience, and expertise prior to and during my fieldwork. And to many, many more people along the way. Thank you.

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Acronyms

AQ	Al-Qaeda
ChRI	Chechen Republic of Ichkeria
FSB	Federal Security Service
IK	Caucasus Emirate
IS	Islamic State
OVKBK	United Vilayyat of Kabarda, Balkaria, and Karachay
PPT	Political Process Theory
SMT	Social Movement Theory
SNA	Social Network Analysis

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Introduction

What role does ideology play in sub-state political violence? What is the significance of the ideological positions that its perpetrators adopt? What can we learn from differences and changes to these positions? How we answer these questions determines whether studying the communicative output of insurgent and revolutionary groups is worthwhile. If ideology plays a pivotal role in the appeal, form, and sustainability of political violence and the groups that practise it, then the detailed study of the circulation and evolution of ideas within and beyond a movement is vital. If, however, ideology is secondary or marginal, then the considerable effort required to analyse these ideas is largely wasted, and we are better served by directing our attention elsewhere. In other words, journalists, academics, and state actors all need to understand whether the ideological tree is one worth barking up.

Existing scholarship fails to offer satisfactory answers to these questions. Some scholars place ideologies at the centre of their analysis, devoting their time to understanding their contents and architects. The dominant approach, however – and one that reflects broader trends in the literatures on social movements, political science, and civil war – is to dismiss or downplay ideology. This neglect of ideology as a factor relies on narrow definitions of the concept and framings of the debate, and ignores dimensions of movement behaviour that are difficult to explain without reference to the ideational systems of the actors themselves. At the same time, a number of scholars highlight serious shortcomings in how ideology is treated that others need to take into account, in particular tendencies to take that importance for granted and neglect the context in which movement ideas circulate. Existing scholarship leaves us with as many questions as answers in our efforts to

understand the role ideology plays in political violence.

Understanding Ideology Through Social Movement Theory

This dissertation moves the debate forward by applying Social Movement Theory (SMT) to three cases within a single movement. It draws on three strands of SMT: framing theory, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities. Framing theory stems from an interpretivist perspective that views movement actors as engaged in shaping meaning, which in turn influences decisions to undertake collective action. Diagnostic framing identifies the problems that actors seek to address, and who is to blame for them; prognostic framing proposes solutions to those problems, and a strategy for achieving them; and motivational framing endeavours to persuade people to move from passive agreement to active involvement. Although framing and ideology are not synonymous, the former can be used to capture important dimensions of the latter. The concept of mobilizing structures refers to the actors who are engaged in such meaning construction. Here, two dimensions are particularly pertinent to understanding ideology and the construction and circulation of ideas within a movement: networks and leadership. Finally, the concept of political opportunities offers a mechanism for understanding the context in which movements operate and movement ideas circulate. By examining the interplay of these three factors, we can develop a contextualized understanding of a movement's ideology and how and why it varied and changed over time.

The North Caucasus Insurgency

The three cases around which this study is oriented all come from within Russia's North Caucasus, an area that has been the site of conflict since the collapse of the Soviet

Union. Specifically, I focus on three constituent parts – Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia – of the jihadist umbrella movement known as the Caucasus Emirate (*Imarat Kavkaz*, IK), across the lifespan of that movement, from October 2007 through to August 2015. The North Caucasus as a whole is an understudied area, and much of the attention it has been afforded has related to earlier phases of the conflict and Chechnya's wars with Russia. By contrast, the IK and its ideology, and especially its regional dimensions, have been largely neglected within existing scholarship. Yet the region and its individual republics offer considerable potential for understanding ideology. Having operated for a prolonged period of time, the insurgency has experienced significant internal and external changes, providing an opportunity to see how ideological change is managed on an ideological level. Although the region is often referred to in the singular, the insurgency operated across what is in fact a highly diverse area, allowing us to examine the impact of different conflict origins, circumstances, and policies on what is nominally a single movement and ideology. Finally, most studies of jihadist groups concentrate on movements in predominantly Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Yet the majority of the world's Muslims are not native Arabic speakers, and how religious ideas are translated to other audiences, including in non-Muslim majority countries, is a hugely important subject. Thus, the study of the North Caucasus insurgency opens up the potential to better understand the IK, jihadism, and the role of ideology in political violence more generally.

Research Questions and Structure

This thesis seeks to answer one core question:

- How does a group's ideological evolution relate to changes inside and outside the group, and what does this tell us about the role of ideology in political violence and the significance of ideological change?

Embedded within this are several important sub-questions:

- What is the extent of variance and change in the ideology articulated by North Caucasus insurgent leaders between 2007 and 2015?
- How do insurgent leaders adapt jihadist ideas and ideologies to local audiences and contexts?
- To what degree can we consider the IK to be a unified movement, and what constitutes and shapes the identity of that movement?
- How do internal and external factors affect the evolution of ideologies?
- What can we therefore learn from both leadership communiqués and the evolution of ideologies?

This thesis addresses these questions as follows. The first part locates the study within existing scholarship, examining current understandings of ideology, social movements, and the North Caucasus insurgency. Accordingly, chapter one examines how ideology is conceptualized, how and why it is marginalized in contemporary debates about political violence, and the limitations and consequences of that marginalization. Chapter two provides an overview of Social Movement Theory, concentrating on the concepts of framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities, and how these can be used to address the shortcomings in existing approaches to ideology. Chapter three then introduces

the North Caucasus as a subject of study, explaining the evolution of the conflict in the region and how ideology has been treated in relation to the contemporary insurgency, and it develops a rigorous and sophisticated methodology for applying SMT to the chosen cases. The second part of the study offers a rich empirical discussion of ideological evolution in each of these cases. Chapters four, five, and six examine the framing strategies, leadership composition and networks, and political environment in, respectively, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia, and seek to interpret ideological change within each republic. The final part of the study draws out broader conclusions from the individual case studies. Chapter seven identifies commonalities and differences across the cases and answers those research questions specific to the cases. The final chapter concludes by identifying broader insights into the role of ideology in political violence, specifying the contribution of the study, and identifying several avenues for further investigation.

Conclusions and Contribution of the Study

This thesis argues that the IK's leadership in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia did not, on the whole, offer a sophisticated ideological vision that identified clear problems and a plan of action for addressing them. Instead, and with increasing frequency, they relied on existing understandings and narratives and – with notable exceptions – failed to engage in key dimensions of meaning construction. The one issue to which these leaders did devote significant attention was the construction of a distinct jihadist identity, and they relied heavily upon this for more explicit mobilizing strategies. Yet, across statements, highly localized references and identity construction call into question the unity of the movement. Moreover, leaders often engaged only superficially with either the outside world or jihadist scholarship, even as the insurgency itself aligned

with global actors and processes, compelling a reconsideration of the IK's relationship with the broader jihadist movement. Finally, there was a progressive degradation of the IK's leadership cadres and a failure to respond to new challenges, indicating a movement in decline and turning inwards.

These findings offer a number of insights into the role of ideology in political violence. Communiqués tell us a great deal about the nature of leadership and movements, even absent information on audience reception. By looking at a corpus of statements, it becomes possible to identify important nuances in how leaders position their movements and challenge simplistic narratives. This study argues that identity is central to ideology, particularly in non-intellectual movements like the IK. Indeed, it is difficult to understand ideology without fully integrating identity. This is not typically acknowledged in existing scholarship, where identity has largely supplanted ideology. The IK's leadership offered a clear conception of how people should behave and who they should be in order to bring their desired world into being, even if they were vague as to what that world would look like. Yet where it failed was in shaping an identity that was unique to the IK in particular, rather than the jihadist movement as a whole. Moreover, a key difference between early and late leaders lay not so much in their ability to articulate a sophisticated political agenda as in their ability to respond to concerns about the practicability of action. This suggests that ideological appeal has a far more pragmatic dimension than is commonly recognized. Finally, this study illustrates that the articulation of ideology and efforts to shape meaning closely reflect the political environments in which these processes occur, indicating the importance of contextualized readings of ideology and challenging presumptions about how actors construct meaning that are drawn exclusively from the study of movements operating in liberal settings.

Overall, therefore, this thesis offers a number of significant contributions. It significantly advances our understanding of the North Caucasus insurgency, introducing into the discussion a large quantity of hitherto unexploited primary and secondary source data. It generates new findings about ideology through an examination of it at the empirical level, offering an unparalleled level of detail and insights that are unavailable in purely abstract discussions or relatively superficial examinations of ideological content. Finally, it offers a number of important methodological contributions to social movement studies that allow for the rigorous application of SMT to contexts where data availability is problematic, and it brings important theoretical strands of SMT into closer dialogue with one another.

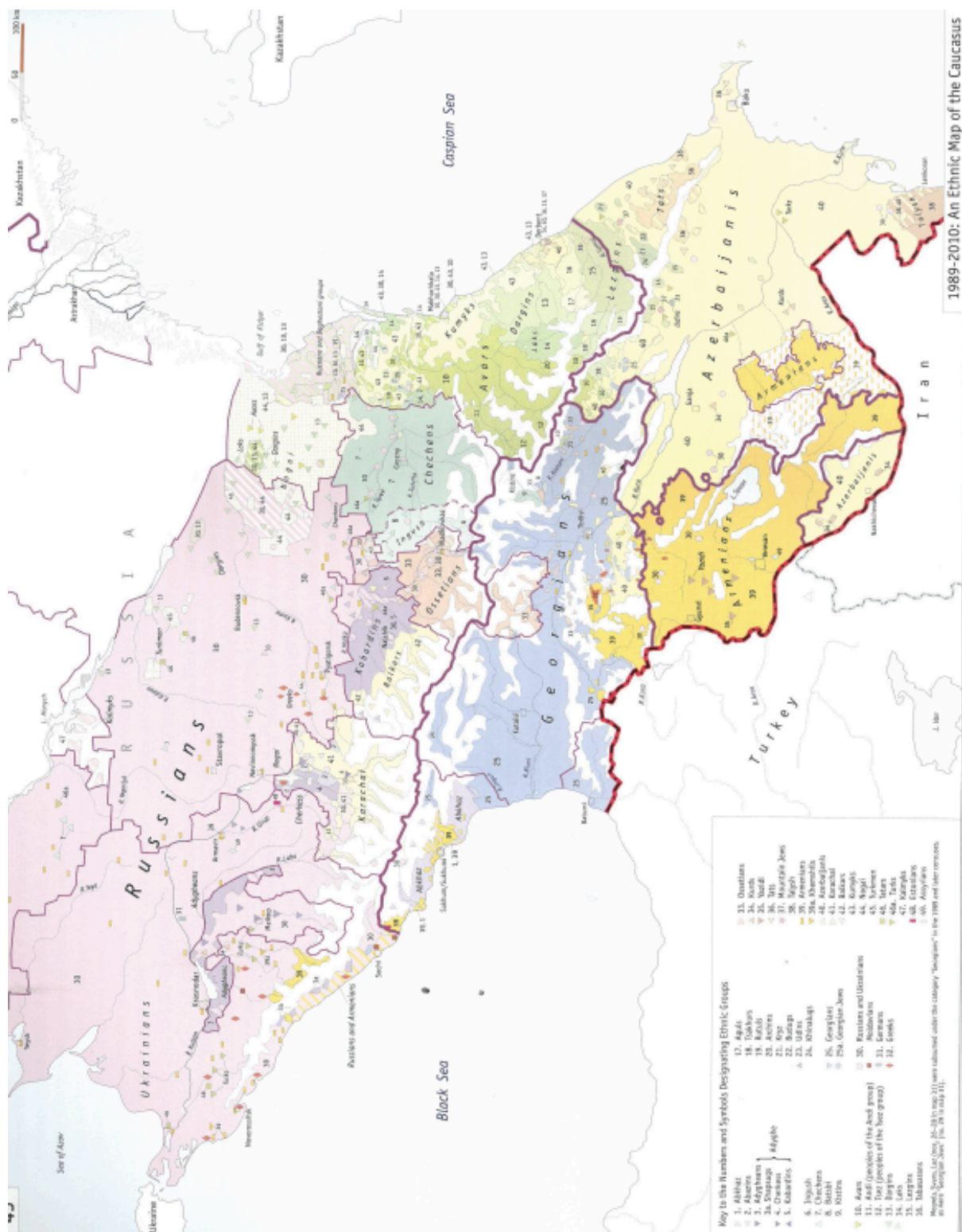


Figure 2. Ethnic map of the North Caucasus (Tsutsiev, 2014:149)

Part One: Ideology and Insurgency

Chapter One

Understanding the Role of Ideology in Political Violence

Introduction

Scholars have long sought to understand the origins, spread, and decline of sub-state political violence. Thousands of articles, books, workshops and research programmes have been devoted to identifying and analysing the various factors that might explain its emergence and perpetuation. Yet this scholarship is ambiguous and often contradictory when it comes to assessing the role of ideology in political violence. For some scholars, ideologies are of central importance and they have devoted their time to understanding their content and architects. Consider, for example, jihadism, one of the key ideologies under which contemporary sub-state violence is organized around the world. There is now a sizeable body of scholarly work devoted to the statements of key ideologues (Lia, 2007; Kepel and Milelli, 2008; Lahoud, 2009; Wagemakers, 2012; Holbrook, 2014). According to Brachman (2009:53), these ideologues provide “the intellectual coherence, ideological ammunition and religious legitimation to the movement.” Some scholars have identified typologies or distinct ‘schools’ of jihadism that compare movement positions on issues (Gerges, 2009; Hegghammer, 2009b, 2015; Hamid and Farrall, 2015), thereby implicitly or explicitly claiming that differences in ideological positions matter. Lahoud (2010:5-7) goes so far as to claim that jihadists are united only by a common idea and will reject the authority of any leaders who are “perceived to have deviated from the right path.” As such, she attributes a key role in behaviour and decision-making – even to their very willingness

to operate as a collective actor – to ideology.

However, the dominant paradigm in the study of political violence is to reject or marginalize the role of ideology. Some dismiss ideology as nothing more than a Machiavellian tool of manipulation in the hands of leaders and ideologues, or as subordinate to more fundamental factors and interests (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Weinstein, 2007; Schaefer, 2011). Others, seeking to understand what motivates people to become involved in violence, focus on the role of networks and opportunities and see ideology as playing only a secondary, post-involvement role (Kalyvas, 2006; Alonso, 2007; Meadowcraft and Morrow, 2016; Morrison, 2016b). Reflecting on a broader move in the social sciences away from giving ideology careful consideration, Malešević (2006:2) memorably describes it as “the academic equivalent of a mullet”: ubiquitous in the 1970s and 1980s, it has fallen badly out of fashion.

This debate, the contours of which will be explored below, is problematic for a number of reasons. Detailed treatments of content that do not address questions of the function and role of ideology invariably run aground on that most confounding of questions: So what? If we cannot say what ideology does or why it is important, then we cannot hope to explain the significance of adopting or changing a particular ideological stance. If, however, we want to argue that ideologies are irrelevant or subordinate, then how do we explain the resources that violent political actors so consistently devote to their development and promotion, or the prevalence of particular ideologies in certain historical periods? We must either claim that this behaviour is not fully rational, or presume that ideology serves a certain purpose – forcing us to return to questions of what that purpose is, and to consider the contradictions in some of the answers offered.

In this dissertation, I move this debate forward by bridging the divide between

content and function. Using the case study of the insurgency that operated in Russia's North Caucasus, I examine how the ideology articulated by the leadership of a movement varied geographically and changed over time. I explore how changes in ideological content were influenced by and reflected changes in the composition of groups and their operating environment. I therefore prioritise considerations of what the ideology of the North Caucasus insurgency was and how it was shaped. At the same time, the definition of ideology employed in this study compels consideration of its transformative nature. Consequently, although I do not seek to directly 'measure' the relationship between ideology and mobilization, I do seek to understand how insurgent actors endeavoured to shape the meanings around the conflicts they were involved in, in order to mobilise others behind their cause. As a first step in this direction, in this chapter I will examine existing debates about ideology and make the theoretical case for giving it serious consideration. In the first section, I look at different conceptualizations of the term itself and their consequences for how we study ideology. In the second section, I explore the arguments against affording ideology an important role in analysis, the important challenges these raise, and what is left unexplained by their rejection or marginalization of ideology. In the third section, I examine the relationship between ideology and leadership, and the significance of role differentiation for developing a more complete understanding of ideology. Finally, I conclude by identifying some of the questions that are unresolved in existing treatments of ideology.

What is Ideology?

Before we can hope to assess the role and significance of ideology, we must first decide what we mean when we use the term. Ideology, after all, is not merely a contested concept; it is disputed from every possible angle. Illustrating the multiplicity of understandings, Gerring's comprehensive study (1997:967) identifies seven broad points of divergence in defining the concept:

1. Location	(b) Subordinate	(c) Abstraction
(a) Thought	5. Function	(d) Specificity
(b) Behavior	(a) Explaining	(e) Hierarchy
(c) Language	(b) Repressing	(f) Stability
2. Subject matter	(c) Integrating	(g) Knowledge
(a) Politics	(d) Motivating	(h) Sophistication
(b) Power	(e) Legitimizing	(i) Facticity
(c) The world at-large	6. Motivation	(j) Simplicity
3. Subject	(a) Interest-based	(k) Distortion
(a) Social class	(b) Non-interest based	(l) Conviction
(b) Any group	(c) Non-expedient	(m) Insincerity
(c) Any group or individual	7. Cognitive/affective structure	(n) Dogmatism
4. Position	(a) Coherence (internal)	(o) Consciousness
(a) Dominant	(b) Contrast (external)	(p) Unconsciousness

Figure 3. Gerring's (1997:967) "comprehensive definitional framework" of ideology.

Adopting a somewhat different approach, Leader Maynard (2013:314) attempts to map the "field" of ideological analysis from a disciplinary perspective. He identifies three broad approaches — conceptual (focusing on the content of ideas), discursive (focusing on communicative practices), and quantitative (focusing on causal links and functions and neglecting content) — and four dimensions through which these can be approached:

	Conceptualization of Ideology	Source of Ideology's Power	Main Agents of Ideological Change	Principal Data for Analysis
Conceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-pejorative ▪ Non-dimensional or multi-dimensional ▪ Different ideologies not mutually exclusive ▪ Necessary ▪ Ubiquitous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capture of political language ▪ 'Sense-making' utility as a mapping device ▪ Affective commitments (CAM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intellectuals ▪ Key political actors ▪ Political organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Historical works ▪ Major texts by political organisations ▪ Discourse of major political actors ▪ Interview data (CAM)
Discursive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Semi-pejorative (except rhetorical approaches) ▪ Non-dimensional or multi-dimensional ▪ Unnecessary (CDA) ▪ Necessary (post-structuralism) ▪ Ubiquitous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capture of political language ▪ Socialisation ▪ Unconscious psychological processes/needs (esp. Lacanians, perhaps post-structuralism in general) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political organisations ▪ Media outlets ▪ Whole social structure (post-structuralism) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discourse in society at large ▪ Discourse of major political actors ▪ Wider cultural symbols, imagery etc.
Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-pejorative ▪ Unidimensional ▪ Tightly coherent ▪ Different ideologies mutually exclusive ▪ Unnecessary ▪ Not ubiquitous—generally limited to elites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal commitments ▪ Socialisation ▪ Unconscious psychological processes/needs (political psychology) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political elites ▪ Political organisations ▪ Social/activist movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surveyed attitudes ▪ Surveyed personality traits (political psychology) ▪ Roll-call/institutional data

Figure 4. Leader Maynard's (2013:314) "varying answers to four central questions about ideology"

A thorough exploration of these debates over what constitutes ideology is beyond the scope of this chapter. Indeed, as Gerring's work shows, this is virtually a dissertation project in and of itself, and Gerring has done us a service in doing much of this labour already. Nevertheless, where we position ourselves within these debates is clearly of critical importance. As Leader Maynard's table neatly illustrates, it influences what we are prepared to accept as evidence of ideology's role and the methodologies that we use. It also impacts upon the conclusions that we are able to draw. If, for example, we define ideology as a mechanism for securing the position of those who hold power, we cannot use it to analyse those who challenge for, rather than possess, power. If we assign a socialization/integration role to our definition, we are engaged in tautology if we then argue that ideology plays a role in socializing individuals into groups. If we prioritize the ideational component, we cannot study ideology solely through behavioural variables. Unfortunately, it is at this first hurdle of definition that so many studies of ideology fall, leaving the term undefined or defined in such a way that it cannot be operationalized (Fine

and Sandstrom, 1993:22). The result is that “it is not clear that leading theorists actually share a common understanding of what ideology means, let alone how it relates to other closely implicated phenomena” (Leader Maynard, 2014:821).

Further complicating matters is the fact that the same term is used to describe phenomena operating at very different scales. At one end of the spectrum, ideology may refer to overarching systems of philosophical and political thought: the grand -isms of communism, fascism, jihadism, or anarchism. At the other, it may relate to specific sub-state, group-level manifestations of those thought systems: the ideology of Al-Qaeda (AQ), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or the Red Brigades. Somewhere in between lie the ideologies that govern entire polities, such as that of Communist China. The chosen scale impacts the priority that should be afforded to different sources. The writings of Karl Marx may be central to any analysis of communism writ large, but tell us very little about how communism was interpreted by Maoist rebels in Nepal. The chosen scale may also influence the level of complexity that can be demanded as a prerequisite of an ideology. Whereas it may be reasonable to require a certain degree of sophistication for an overarching thought system, at the group level ideology can arguably, to a degree, be parasitic off the larger thought system with which it associates itself – since it can draw from the broader well of ideas that already exist, rather than having to create them itself. In assessing political violence, it would be unusual for scholars to argue that a group has no ideology whatsoever, not least because a rudimentary classification (Islamist, communist, anarchist) is usually a starting point for any characterization of a group. We need to recognize that we lack a vocabulary for distinguishing between these different scales, and any attempt to impose one would be an exercise in futility given the pervasiveness of references to ideology. Instead, we are compelled to nest these scales one within another,

like matreshka dolls: Debates about the ideology of AQ, for example, will necessarily locate it within the broader spectrum of jihadist ideology (Hegghammer, 2009b; Hegghammer, 2015). Nevertheless, we need to be conscious of the scale at which our analyses operate, and how these relate to other scales. The differences between group level manifestations may, for example, be less important than broad ideological churches. It is, after all, jihadism — rather than nationalism, socialism, or anarchism — that has captured the current global insurgent imagination, just as each of those have captured it at different moments in history. If we concentrate on one level and yet use this to reach conclusions about all levels, then we may reach misleading conclusions about ideology as a complex whole.

Towards a Practical Definition of Ideology

In this dissertation, I am concerned primarily with ideology at the group level, but the definition I choose to use can be applied across scales. I understand it in neutral terms: while ideologies may indeed be agents of social change and directed towards “defending and attacking current social relations and the social system” (Zald, 2000:3-4), they cannot always be reduced to such — unless we conceive of all political thought in these terms. Moreover, I approach it from a conceptual angle, and therefore prioritize its ideational dimensions. Political violence is not reducible solely to physical acts, for this accounts for only the violent component of the term, not the political. Indeed, violence itself is mediated and interpreted, and there are “ideas, beliefs and claims and visions about violence, and how violence is and should be” (Ramsay and Holbrook, 2015:84-85). The ideational component becomes even more important when considering a subset of political violence, terrorism. Despite the contested nature of the term (Schmid, 2012), most rigorous

definitions echo the sentiment that “terrorist violence communicates a political message” and has an audience beyond its immediate target (Crenshaw, 1981:379). If terrorism is held to be communicative, it follows that there must be something beyond the act of violence itself to communicate. At the same time, the ideologies of politically violent groups cannot be reduced simply to their portrayal and justification of violence, for they are typically much broader and more complex than that. Actors’ violence may be what draws us to study them, but they cannot be understood exclusively through reference to that violence (Kalyvas, 2006; Ranstorp, 2013).

This, however, still leaves us with the challenge of determining what constitutes an ideology. This is a far from simple task. In practical terms, “developing an empirically grounded list of the attitudes constituting an ideology is no easier than listing the contents of culture” (Fine and Sandstrom, 1993:24). Instead, we are better served by identifying a number of common attributes that are shared by ideologies, and can therefore be used to assess their content. First and foremost, they establish a group’s distinct identity, the challenges it faces, and its aims and objectives in meeting those challenges (Sanín and Wood, 2014:214). More broadly, they provide a framework for interpreting the world in which a group operates and establishing the “ethical, moral and normative principles that guide personal and collective action” (Oliver and Johnston, 2000:44). The process of establishing group identity and desired behaviours requires differentiation from other groups, and such distinctions are rarely favourable to the out-group. For politically violent groups, this can be taken to the extreme, dehumanizing opponents, establishing the targets against which actions should be directed, and rationalizing violence — in short, providing “the moral and political vision that inspires violence” (Drake, 1998:78).

Capturing many of these key attributes, Fine and Sandstrom (1993:23-24) propose a

definition of ideology that will be used as the framework for the discussion in this thesis:

A set of interconnected beliefs and attitudes, shared and used by members of a group or population, that relate to problematic aspects of social and political topics. These beliefs have an explicit evaluative and implicit behavioral component.

In other words, ideologies set out a vision of the way the world is and how it should be, and how adherents should ideally behave to bridge the divide between the two. The specification that ideology relates to *interconnected* beliefs and attitudes captures the importance of complexity. This does not impose any conditions on the quality of the beliefs themselves, or what may be thought of as the sophistication of the ideas. Ideologies can vary in content and detail, ranging from the vague to the highly prescriptive. The term ideological, moreover, should not be treated as a substitute for intellectual. As such, this understanding departs from that of scholars such as Hegghammer (2015) who view ideology predominantly as something doctrinal, rooted in a core body of texts. The problem with such a perspective is its narrowness, ruling out a considerable part of the ideational systems around political violence and forcing authors to introduce other concepts — “traditions,” “beliefs,” “worldviews” and so on — to account for them. Instead, it adheres to the approach articulated by Snow (2007:400), who advocates viewing ideology as operating on a continuum from “a tightly connected set of values and beliefs at one end to a loosely coupled set of values and beliefs at the other end.” For example, if we were to impose a requirement that ideologies consist of tightly connected values and beliefs, then evidence of a lack of coherence in the beliefs of groups could validate a claim that ideology is unimportant to understanding their behaviour. At the same time, this would hamper our ability to consider how ideologies operate across the different scales outline above. A demand for complexity instead requires that beliefs and attitudes permeate multiple aspects

of how its adherents believe they should live and act, rather than being related to a single domain. Environmentalists, for example, may orient themselves around one topic — the environment — but this orientation can influence a broad range of activities, from lifestyle choices to electoral preferences.

The Rejection of Ideology — and its Limits

Explanations of organized political violence can marginalize or reject a role for ideology in many ways, but four overlapping approaches are particularly common. Some scholars simply dismiss ideology as a rhetorical device or instrumental tool, and consequently afford it only passing consideration. Others treat it as subordinate to underlying interests and conditions, reducing ideology to its simplest forms or focusing on those apparently more important factors. Both approaches are particularly prevalent among those immersed in the positivist and quantitative traditions of US political science. A third group, coming more from qualitative traditions and disciplines such as criminology and psychology, seek to understand why people become involved in violent groups. Their answers focus on case studies and specific contexts and often prioritize alternative explanations — such as networks, opportunities, and trust — in their answers, relegating ideology to a post-involvement psychological or socialization role. A final group of scholars span the qualitative and quantitative traditions and employ rational actor models to examine how extremist groups overcome the collective action problem. Their answers focus on the provision of “club goods” as an explanation for mobilization, again relegating ideology to, at best, a post-involvement role. Each of these perspectives warrants detailed consideration in order to understand the challenges they pose to the study of ideology, and the limits of their explanatory models.

Machiavellian Operators

The first broad group of scholars treats ideology as little more than an instrumental tool in the hands of powerful actors, and therefore as unworthy of careful consideration. In its crudest form, this position can mean ideology is referenced only in passing, typically through reference to the appropriate broad -ism in contextual discussions, before the discussion moves on to matters considered of greater importance. In such cases, ideology is mainly treated through neglect. Where it is addressed directly, accounts are imbued with cynicism over the motives of those who deploy it. Thus Schaefer (2011:16) argues:

Insurgencies develop around a common ideology — often intentionally vague and contradictory — which may change as the insurgency gains momentum. This allows the insurgency maximum flexibility to gain support while remaining uncommitted to specific objectives.

In a similar, if more sophisticated, vein, Weinstein (2007:8) asserts:

Rebel leaders develop appeals around ethnic, religious, cultural, or ideological claims, reminding individuals of their membership in or affiliation with aggrieved groups, playing on their allegiance to a particular set of ideals, or activating norms of cooperation and reciprocity in order to motivate participation.

In such a reading, ideology is employed for its utilitarian value. The actual content of the ideology is largely irrelevant: it is simply that which delivers the optimum return from a target population. Ideology thus becomes nothing more than a means for political leaders and ideologues to strengthen their position vis-à-vis other actors, typically by attracting followers and external support.

Such explanations are logically incomplete. As Sanín and Wood (2014) observe, they presume ideology to be important to the targets of that instrumentality, whether they be

domestic recruits or foreign sponsors. Indeed, we are left with the impression that the recruits or sponsors are the only actors capable of genuine commitment to an ideology, since the main actors are all acting instrumentally. Per the Weinstein quote above, ideals and beliefs are things held by others, not rebel leaders themselves. Consequently, insurgencies appear to consist solely of Machiavellian manipulators and gullible fools, with “members playing out ideological scripts written for them by ill-intended demagogues” (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2012:247). Furthermore, instrumental approaches are often employed to explain the switch from one ideology to another, with the original usually portrayed as in some ways “native” and the new one “foreign.” Yet why the ideology to which groups are defecting holds greater instrumental value than the original is precisely what these approaches are unable to explain. In making a switch, the leaders of movements are constrained by history and culture and forced to “choose an ideology from a set of historically relevant ideologies, not from a long list of all possible ideologies” (Sanín and Wood, 2014:222). Recognition of this fact, however, requires that we take the actual content of ideology into consideration.

Root Causes

A second constellation of scholars who reject a role for ideology emerges from among those who seek to explain political violence through reference to so-called “root causes.” Crenshaw (1981:381-382) divides such root causes into preconditions, the long-term factors that may “set the stage” for violence, and precipitants, the specific events that may directly trigger it. Although she focuses on terrorism in particular, this analytical framework is equally applicable to other forms of political violence. Building on it, Bjørge (2005:2-4) divides causes into those that are structural (demography, globalization,

deprivation), facilitator (communication opportunities, weapon availability), motivational (specific, personally-experienced grievances), and triggering (provocative events, peace talks). Root cause explanations do not automatically translate into a rejection of ideology: both Crenshaw and Bjørge explicitly acknowledge that beliefs, ideologies, and ideologists can play a role in shaping perceptions and mobilizing around grievances. However, the application of the framework tends to draw attention away from ideological factors, particularly when operationalized in quantitative models. As such, the tendency to focus on supposed underlying factors and conditions is particularly prevalent among those rooted in positivist and quantitative traditions. Sanin and Wood (2012) identify some of the most influential studies of conflict and civil war as adopting this approach. Thus, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) make no reference to ideology, but instead focus on grievances, proxied through measures of ethnic fractionalization, political repression, political exclusion, and income inequality. They conclude that greed-related factors better predict the outbreak of civil war. In a separate paper, Collier (1999:2) explicitly argues that motivation can be conferred from behaviour, and any contradiction between behaviour and rhetoric is of secondary importance. In another seminal work, Fearon and Laitin (2003) test 11 different hypotheses to explain the prevalence of civil war; notably, none relate to the ideological dimensions of conflict. Grievances are again proxied, through variables such as ethnic and religious diversity, income, and civil liberties. This is not to argue that all conflicts necessarily have an ideological dimension, but to highlight how ideology is not even properly considered within such models.

These positivist approaches demonstrate a number of critical shortcomings. Where ideology is acknowledged, to describe its treatment as simplistic would be something of an understatement. The voluminous works of actors like al-Suri, bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, al-

Maqdisi, and Anwar al-Awlaki may run to the thousands of pages and minutes of video and disagree on innumerable points of substance, but apparently they could have saved themselves the effort — the word “jihadist” is sufficient to describe them all. So too with the myriad variants of nationalist-separatist, communist, or far right ideologies, all of which are neatly assigned the appropriate one- or two-word label and fed into a statistical model. Within such models, the conceptual dimensions are not merely not treated seriously — they are not treated at all. Ideological change within categories is, of necessity, ignored. Actors, meanwhile, are “presumed to be unitary actors, which removes any need to analyse group cohesion, discipline, or identity — for which a careful consideration of ideology is essential” (Sanín and Wood, 2014:215). When suitability for publication is assessed, the statistical rigour of the model appears to take precedence over whether the underlying data is reliable or adequately captures the complexity of that which it claims to measure — ignoring the old computing maxim of “garbage in, garbage out.” Authors make bold, universal claims that function in the abstract and demonstrate the appropriate statistical robustness, but collapse when applied to individual cases by people with sufficient knowledge of the requisite languages, cultures, and contexts. Recognizing this, Cramer (2002:1847) accused those who use neoclassical economic models to explain conflict — such as the earlier work of Collier and Hoeffler — of offering explanations that are “extremely reductionist, highly speculative, and profoundly misleading” and fail to capture the complexities of reality. A decade and a half later, these criticisms remain valid.

Positivist approaches also fail to acknowledge and account for the role of subjective interpretations of events, circumstances and, in particular, identity. We know that individuals in the exact same objective conditions do not automatically respond in the same way; if they did, there would be a perfect correlation between conditions, such as root

causes, and those resorting to violence. Yet modelling such as that by Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Collier and Hoeffler (2004) treats grievances as objective and constant factors, and how they are experienced as irrelevant. Moreover, factors such as ethnicity and religious adherence are social constructs and do not automatically translate into grievances. The salience, applicability, and relative importance of different elements of identity and culture vary across people, areas, and time (Williams, 2007:101). As such, we need to consider how these factors are constructed and become salient. This invariably requires us to account for the actors who may actively seek a role in such construction, including leaders and ideologues.

Rank-and-File Perspectives

A third challenge to viewing ideology as significant to considerations of political violence comes from those who, from a range of disciplinary perspectives, seek to answer questions relating to the motivations of its practitioners. Crenshaw (2011:75-76) argues that there is no clear relationship between an individual's motivations for joining a group and that group's stated ideology and goals. Instead, they may be motivated by opportunity, a need to belong, a desire for social status, and/or the promise of material reward. These claims are supported by analyses drawing on fieldwork with members of violent groups. Horgan (2005), for example, prioritizes personal attitudes and experiences, community contexts, and the availability of alternative pathways as explanations for the decision to join groups. Ideology only becomes important post-involvement, as individuals deepen their commitment and seek out an "ideological context" and specialized language to justify their decisions. Alonso (2007:4-8) similarly argues that recruits to the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) "did not have a developed political motivation based on strong

ideological foundations.” Instead, “ideological convergence” occurred as part of a post-involvement socialization process. Rasmussen (2013) found that her interviewees were often unaware of, disinterested in, or disagreed with the ideological material she had consulted prior to going into the field. Morrison (2016b), meanwhile, argues that, in making decisions about which factions to align with when movements splinter, personal connections and trust are more important than either reasoning or ideology. In his highly influential work on violence in civil war, Kalyvas (2006:44-46) criticizes existing literature for what he considers to be a “heavy bias towards ideological accounts,” and consequently gives scant treatment to the subject of ideology. He offers the following theoretical scenario to illustrate why this perceived bias is problematic. A woman is coerced into joining a rebel group, but later finds her village destroyed in an indiscriminate army assault. As a result, she becomes fully committed to the rebel cause. Reconstructing her own motivation for joining post-factum, she claims that she was motivated by ideology. According to Kalyvas, the “unsophisticated researcher who then utilizes this reconstructed evidence will be relying on biased evidence.”

These criticisms raise an important point: Any attempt to paint involvement in exclusively ideological terms overlooks the many factors that may be of equal or even greater importance. Yet these scholars’ case against ideology is an exaggerated one. A refrain commonly heard in their framing of their contribution is that “it’s not all about ideology.” This, however, is a straw man, implying the existence of a consensus position that ideology is everything. Invariably, they fail to identify the army of scholars who are apparently advancing such a dubious proposition. Instead, where they evidence their assertion at all, they typically rely on a very narrow reading of the literature. Klein (2016), for example, deploys the straw man in the very title of his article, but then builds his case

exclusively around a challenge to Rapoport's influential but highly simplistic "four waves" theory of terrorism. The "ideology isn't everything" argument simply sidesteps the vast body of literature across disciplines that, for all its flaws, has given careful consideration to the role of ideology. There is certainly legitimacy to the criticism that some scholars of ideology, in focusing on analysing content, simply take its importance for granted. Implicitly presuming that ideology is *an* important factor, however, is far from the same thing as explicitly arguing that it is *the sole* important factor.

Socialization explanations are also unduly narrow in a number of ways. Firstly, they tend to be based on the very small number of cases that are, relatively speaking, easy to access. The conflict in Northern Ireland, for example, is one of the most-studied in the world, and findings drawn from it have had a disproportionate impact on the field of terrorism studies. Whether these findings are applicable across different movement types requires careful consideration. Here, the hubris of US political science, the preferences of which have a major impact on English-language scholarship more generally, appears to have a particularly corrosive effect: Within that paradigm, recognition of the limits of what we know appears to be the exception rather than the rule. Secondly, they typically prioritize a doctrinal understanding of ideology, where ignorance of supposedly core texts serves as evidence of ideology's irrelevance. As such, they reject a role for ideology almost at the point of definition, and fail to consider how ideology functions across the various scales outlined above, except through the introduction of alternative concepts. English (2012:129), for example, points to the prevalence of "republican traditions" in the families of early PIRA members, but views these as something distinct from ideology. Finally, they are focused in the main on one question: How and why do people become involved in groups? Yet this is not the only question to which the study of ideology is relevant. Kalyvas'

example demonstrates this well. If we are concerned with the individual and why they decided to join the group, then the data may well be misleading. If, however, we are interested in how groups survive and operate, or in how individuals justify and sustain their involvement and encourage others to join them, then the data becomes considerably more relevant. Socialization explanations themselves point to ideologies being important to answering some questions. They afford ideologies an adhesive quality within groups, but fail to explain what makes them adhesive, how ideologies are maintained, and under what circumstances they lose their adhesiveness.

Rational Actors and ‘Club Goods’

A final challenge emerges from those who employ rational actor models to understand how groups overcome “Olson’s paradox” (Olson, 1971): that rational actors will have limited incentive to participate in collective action because non-participants can reap the benefits without bearing the costs. Iannacone and Berman (2006) and Berman and Laitin (2008), for example, argue that involvement in religious extremist organizations and in suicide attacks is explained not by theology, but by the “club goods” these groups offer — the spiritual and material benefits that accrue only to members, in contrast to the “public goods” reaped by everyone. Here, the content of ideology is not necessarily irrelevant, but it is distinctly subordinate to a cost-benefit analysis by rational actors. According to this view, religious militancy is a consequence not of beliefs (and here it is worth noting that religions themselves fulfil the definitional requirements of ideology as understood in this dissertation), but of the religious-political environment — and of government oppression in particular. Building on the club model to examine a far-right protest movement, the English Defence League (EDL), Meadowcroft and Morrow (2016:3) argue that involvement, both

initial and on-going, was contingent upon benefits outweighing the costs. Again, they attribute a secondary role to ideology, asserting that it “played an important unifying role within the group, and facilitated the supply of increased self-worth and group solidarity, but was not the driving force behind membership.”

Such studies mirror socialization explanations in relegating ideology to a secondary, post-involvement role. In doing so, they replicate the flaws of their overly narrow approach to the issue and the questions to which ideology is relevant. Anticipating a possible objection, we can also see the troubling issue of definition rearing its head again. The far right as a whole is sometimes portrayed as less ideological than, for example, jihadism, and as such the relevance of a study into the EDL might be questioned. This characterization, however, is debatable: Far right groups often articulate a relatively clear vision of how the world is, how it should be, and how people should behave to bridge the divide between the two. As a general rule, however, the far right is less doctrinal and less intellectual than segments (but certainly not all) of the jihadist world. Once again, therefore, we have ideology reduced to doctrine and a neglect of the different scales at which ideology may function — where ideology may be less important to specific group identity than it is to broader movement identity. Furthermore, rational actor models are arguably just as deficient as the statistical models used to measure the impact of root causes in capturing the complexity of human behaviour. Outside of tidy academic models, people rarely sit down and deliberatively calculate the advantages and disadvantages of every decision that they make. Even if they did, actors may not possess perfect information and their assessments may be guided as much by subjective perceptions as objective realities. This, however, leads us back to the role of those who seek to shape such perceptions, including leaders and ideologues. Moreover, ideologies, much like other factors, cannot be reduced to purely

cognitive processes, as rational actor models presume. By over-relying on individual agency, there is a tendency to ignore emotion, interdependence, and the variety of structural factors that may influence a person's actions (McNay, 2000). With regard to ideology, the neglect of emotion in particular can have a significant impact, because "people understand ideology through emotional experiences that help them to make sense of the world" (Fine and Sandstrom, 1993:29).

Meaning and mobilization

The preceding discussion illustrates the ways in which the meanings around conflict are relevant to considerations of mobilisation. In different ways, the preceding explanations all afford some kind of role for ideology and require that at least some members of a group be "normatively and emotionally committed to an ideology" (Sanín and Wood, 2014:220). Ideology, after all, at its simplest represents nothing more than a "semantic system for coding reality" (Saktanber, 2002:237). This is not to attribute a simple causal power to ideology, for its recipients retain agency in how they interpret and engage with it. Moreover, "much as the physical world is subject to the laws of gravity, ideology must be grounded in the forces of social and economic life that govern the relations of people to one another" (White, 2002:79). Rather, the study of ideology reflects an effort to understand the ways in which movement actors actively endeavour to shape the meanings, experiences, and interpretations that are a prerequisite for mobilization. It sheds light on one part of the process of mobilization, without claiming to explain that process in its entirety.

Numerous studies have grappled with questions of Islamist mobilization, drawing on just such an interpretive framework. Wiktorowicz (2004a:15), for example, observes that a body of literature has emerged that seeks to understand how collective identities are formed

and meaning is “produced, articulated, and disseminated by movement actors through interactive processes.” Wickham’s (2002, 2004) examination of mobilization in Egypt sees it as contingent on movements’ abilities to not only exploit grievances and provide resources and opportunities, but also to generate motivations for action. One of the ways in which movements tried to do this was through shaping civic consciousness and achieving what she calls a ‘transvaluation’ of the values guiding individual lives and priorities. Such findings resonate with those of Saktanber (2002), whose study of the role of women in Islamic movements in Turkey sees such movements as seeking a transformation of moral values and identities that could translate ideologies into living practices. Bayat (2005) asserts that highly diverse Islamist movements are brought together by ‘imagined solidarities,’ which are in part shaped by deliberate efforts by leaders striving to achieve consensus. Key to all these studies is the idea that meanings are neither homogenous nor static, but rather continually rearticulated and renegotiated. Looking beyond Islamist movements and turning to violent ones, da Silva (2019:144) argues that those engaged in political violence in Portugal developed identity positions that justified their movement into, through, and out of groups. These positions, in turn, “develop in interaction with the with the political narratives that inhabit individuals’ spatial and temporal coordinates.” This being the case, it is clear that we need to understand those political narratives in order to understand their engagement.

We can also find more direct evidence of the role of ideology in shaping activism. Police routinely find those suspected of terrorism to be in possession of ideological material (Holbrook, 2017), suggesting it is at least of some relevance to them. Before moving on, it is worthwhile considering several case studies where the actions of groups are hard to explain without reference to their ideology. Karagiannis and McCauley (2006), for

example, examine the ideology of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan and argue that, according to existing social movement theories, the group should have resorted to violence. It possessed the normative, human and organizational resources required for such violence; it operated in a repressive political environment conducive to violence; and it employed a delegitimizing rhetorical strategy supportive of violence. Despite this, the group remained non-violent — a decision the authors attribute to non-violence being a defining feature of the movement's ideology. Goodwin (2007) similarly argues that the African National Congress under apartheid should, according to existing theories of terrorism, have carried out more attacks on white civilians. Their failure to do so is explained in part through an ideological commitment to “nonracial internationalism.” This case, however, is more ambiguous, since such attacks would have undermined support from white allies abroad. Nevertheless, it is clear that some groups prohibit particular tactics “not because they would not have strategic benefit but because their use would undermine the group's ideological commitments” (Sanín and Wood, 2014:221). Other studies similarly find the content of ideology to be relevant in explaining behaviour and strategic choices (Asal et al., 2013).

Leaders and Followers

A recurring thread running through the preceding discussion is the importance of differentiating between the leadership of a movement and its rank and file. The aforementioned work examining the motivations of those who participate in violent political groups strongly supports Gunning's (2012:225) assertion that “the views of a movement's ideologues do not necessarily reflect the beliefs of a movement's battlefield activists.” Crenshaw (2011:93), meanwhile, proposes that leaders may possess “more complex and differentiated belief structures than followers,” and their authority may derive

either from the ability to articulate those beliefs or the relevance of the leaders' background to the belief system. In the introduction to the fortieth anniversary edition of his seminal book *Why Men Rebel*, Gurr (2011:xii) draws attention to his own neglect of ideology and argues,

We understand the mechanisms [of communication]. What we do not understand as well is how skillful communicators can create a sense of identity and common purpose that transcends national boundaries and then use it to mobilize people in many different places for coordinated political action.

Those skilful communicators are often leaders, particularly when leadership is conceived as the performance of key tasks — a topic that will be addressed further in the next chapter. Taken together, this suggests that not only should we expect differences between leadership and rank-and-file ideological perspectives on political violence, but that we also need to integrate those differing expectations into our very conceptualization of leadership. Ideology as an intellectual concern is, after all, an inherently elite activity, even if that elite is self-selecting: We should not expect all actors within a movement to have an equal interest in articulating and debating positions on problematic aspects of social and political topics, even if they share the underlying beliefs.

Existing literature, however, often fails to differentiate between or integrate top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Narrow instrumental readings of ideology focus on the leaders and their goals and interests, whereas researchers asking questions of motivation tend to concentrate on rank-and file members — yet both offer conclusions as if they are talking about the movement as a whole. It may be that there is no contradiction to arguing that ideology is important to the movement and secondary to questions of individual motivation; they are simply approaching the phenomenon of political violence from very different

perspectives. Moreover, the concept of leadership itself can be understood in a number of ways, and how it functions within insurgent movements is theoretically underdeveloped (Youngman and Moore, forthcoming). Power, for example, is a prerequisite of leadership (Burns, 1978:464-465) and, if a movement has any kind of structure or hierarchy — an almost inevitable consequence of organizing — then role differentiation almost by definition means members have different levels of influence or control over resources. In other words, not all voices within a movement are created equal. Leaders, moreover, can be required to perform a number of functions, and by necessity these functions differ from those demanded of rank-and-file members. Among such functions, Weinstein (2007:132) identifies creating common knowledge and expectations; setting work norms; establishing systems of monitoring and control; proving their own commitment to a group's objectives; and responding to shocks. Recognition of these differences gives rise to a host of questions about the nature of leadership and its relationship to ideology. First and foremost, it requires us to consider the relationship between the individual leader and their circumstances and how leaders influence the ideological direction of their movements. How such role differentiation can be applied in practice will be explored further in the following chapter. Here, it is sufficient to recognize the importance of differentiation, and the potential limitations of any study that approaches ideology exclusively from a top-down or bottom-up perspective.

Conclusion: Unanswered Questions in the Study of Ideology

This chapter has sought to make the case that a neglect of ideology leaves important questions about political violence unanswered. If violence is to be considered political, then we need to account for the ideational component, the purpose, that gives it that political

dimension. If leaders employ ideology instrumentally, then we need to understand why the targets of that instrumentality respond to it, and why their responsiveness changes over time. If we accept the foundational logic of an interpretivist epistemology — namely that our view of the world is socially constructed and meaning is as important as any supposedly objective facts and realities — then we need to examine the processes of social construction and the role that different actors play in them. Finally, if we afford ideology an adhesive quality, then we need to examine what it is that makes it adhesive, the processes through which that adhesiveness is maintained, and the circumstances in which it is lost. Taken together, if we neglect ideology, it is clear we are left with considerable gaps in our explanatory models. Consequently, any analysis that ignores ideology entirely is as incomplete as one that focuses exclusively on it.

Nevertheless, those who would marginalize or reject a role for ideology raise a number of important points, and these also warrant serious consideration. Gunning (2012:221) agrees with the theoretical importance of ideology, but identifies,

Four assumptions, often unarticulated, that deserve to be problematized in studies of jihadi ideologues: the assumption of homogeneity (a group's ideology is homogenous and can be gleaned from its official charter or its main ideologues); the assumption of causality (ideology determines a group's behaviour); the assumption of autonomy (ideology is an autonomous factor, independent from context); and the assumption of objectivity (ideology is a hard fact, independent from one's conceptual framework).

These criticisms apply equally to other ideological strands. Particularly problematic is a focus on ideological content at the expense of the context in which it is produced and circulates. Al-Rasheed (2009:302-303), for example, charges that some scholars neglect the context in which groups operate and the conditions against which they react or rebel,

resulting in them being “blinded by the global media messages of jihadi ideology.” As such, she accuses these scholars of taking actors’ own claims at face value, rather than critically examining them. A textual focus can lead to ideology being reified and treated descriptively rather than analytically, and as static rather than dynamic (Snow and Byrd, 2007:120-121). As Gunning (2012) goes on to note, there can be considerable variance and even contradictions within ideologies, and changes in terms of which aspects of ideology resonate at a given time — and sophisticated treatments of ideology need to factor this in to their analysis. Nor are these criticisms necessarily even the most serious that can be leveled at some studies of ideology. Instead, there is a too-frequent neglect of primary sources and rigorous methodologies. Hellmich (2008:112), for example, criticizes early studies of Al-Qaeda’s ideology on precisely such grounds. In many cases, even the actors’ own claims do not even make it to the table, and assertions about ideological content, much less purpose, lack any meaningful foundation whatsoever. The case against ideology may be exaggerated, but it is not without merit. In order to move the debate forward, we need to develop more contextualized and nuanced readings of ideology. In particular, we need to bridge the gap between levels of analysis and gain a better understanding of how leaders shape ideologies, and how these ideologies influence — and are themselves influenced by — changes in the composition of groups and the environments in which they operate. The next chapter will demonstrate that Social Movement Theory (SMT) offers a valuable set of tools that provide the theoretical framework for doing precisely this.

Chapter Two

Interpreting Ideology Through Social Movement Theory

Introduction

If we accept that neglecting ideology leaves unexplained at least some aspects of terrorism and political violence, then we must also accept that the content of an ideology matters. To argue otherwise is to argue that changes in ideology are irrelevant: All that matters is that groups have an ideology, regardless of which one. This is merely the instrumentalist assertion dressed in different clothing. Thus, the first task we are faced with in analysing ideology is to map its content and examine how ideology varies within a group and over time. Yet this only addresses some of the shortcomings in the treatment of ideology laid out in the preceding chapter, namely that ideology is treated as homogenous and static. A second core task lies in contextualizing ideological variance and change and identifying how leadership, group organization and operation, and operating environment interact with that ideological content.

This and the following chapter seek to make the case that Social Movement Theory (SMT) provides a theoretical framework and methodology capable of satisfying both tasks. SMT originated from efforts within Sociology to explain collective action occurring outside of institutional channels. Early research in the 1960s and 1970s predominantly portrayed such action as the result of a breakdown or strain in normal social routines or as the result of perceptions of relative deprivation that purportedly create a psychological strain in individuals, thereby associating collective action with abnormality, irrationality,

spontaneity, and emotion (Buechler, 2007). Breakdown and strain theories, however, found themselves under sustained attack from the 1970s onwards. McAdam (1999, first edition 1982) criticized them for neglecting both the context in which movements operate and the political goals that they advance; for positing a direct relationship between circumstances and behaviour; and for presuming a degree of psychological abnormality. Such criticisms and their correctives coalesced into what McCarthy and Zald (1977) labelled a “resource mobilization approach” (now usually referred to as Resource Mobilization Theory). This advanced three important claims: Support does not necessarily have to be rooted in grievances and values; movement tactics can be contested and influenced by competition and cooperation with other movements; and movements utilize the infrastructure provided by society. In other words, the availability of resources, the composition of movements, and the tactics that they employ are all key variables for explaining collective action. Resource Mobilization Theory’s perceived overemphasis on the importance of resources and neglect of the broader political context, in turn gave birth to what has, in recent decades, become the dominant theoretical framework of SMT (Beck, 2008; Avedissian, 2015), namely Political Process Theory (PPT). PPT has three constituent parts — framing theory, political opportunities, and mobilizing structures — and it is these parts that open up avenues for developing a better understanding of ideology.

In order to make this case, this chapter is structured as follows. The first three parts will unpack existing understandings of PPT and the challenges that each faces. The first section will examine framing theory and how it seeks to capture the process by which actors negotiate and shape meaning. It will focus on three types of framing — diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational — that are of particular relevance to collective political action. The second section will focus on the concept of political opportunities and how this

captures the formal and informal rules that shape collective action. It will explain the different ways in which scholars have sought to assess the broader context in which groups operate, and the problems that have bedevilled their efforts. The third section will turn to mobilizing structures and considerations of the collective actors themselves. It will demonstrate the importance of integrating into analyses understandings of networks and leadership. The chapter will then turn to illustrating the applicability of PPT to analyses of ideology, explaining the relationship between ideology and framing, and the interactive relationship between PPT's component parts. The final section will then make the case for using SMT to understand certain types of political violence, and the challenges that accompany such an application.

Framing Theory: Negotiated Meaning

Credit for the concept of frames is usually attributed to Erving Goffman (1974). Although he himself attributed authorship elsewhere, Goffman was responsible for introducing the concept to sociology. He conceived of frames as “schemata of interpretation” that help people make sense of situations and therefore inform their actions within them. His definition of a frame, however, was imprecise, and it was really David Snow, Robert Benford, and their collaborators who developed framing as a coherent theory for understanding a key part of social movement activity. They sought to address the challenge that,

Meaning is problematic; it does not spring from the object of attention into the actor's head, because objects have no intrinsic meaning. Rather, meaning is negotiated, contested, modified, articulated and rearticulated. In short, meaning is socially constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed (Benford, 1997:410).

Frames offer a language and cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events in

the “world out there” (Wiktorowicz, 2004a:15); they indicate what is important and what is not (Johnston, 2002:640). Framing meanwhile focuses not so much on the content (the frames), but on the negotiated processes by which meaning is constructed (Benford and Snow, 2000).

Framing is not exclusive to social movements, nor are all frames political. Johnston (2002:64) recycles the example of how we are able to make sense of being told that a man sits down at a table, mentions several items of food to a stranger, receives and eats that food, and asks for and pays a “bill” before leaving through reference to a common “restaurant frame.” Nevertheless, framing is crucial to social movement activity because movements “seek to affect interpretations of reality among various audiences” on the presumption that “meaning is prefatory to action” (Benford, 1997:410). Of particular relevance to social movement activity — and, indeed, political mobilization more generally — is the concept of Collective Action Frames. These capture those frames that are action-oriented and seek to inspire and legitimize activities (Benford and Snow, 2000). They are therefore “decidedly more agentic and contentious in the sense of calling for action that problematizes and challenges existing authoritative views and framings of reality” (Snow, 2007:386). Three core framing tasks — diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational — dominate much of the existing literature on Collective Action Frames.

Diagnostic Framing: Identifying Problems and Culprits

Social movements are change-oriented actors: They mobilize in order to address situations or trends that they deem to be problematic. This is true even of movements seeking to preserve the status quo, for whom collective action is necessary only in the face of a challenge to the existing state of affairs. Perception is as important as reality, since

problems “exist only to the extent that certain phenomena are interpreted as such by people” (della Porta and Diani, 2006:74). People therefore need to be convinced that something needs to change as a prerequisite for collective action aimed at securing that change. Diagnostic framing represents the process through which movement actors undertake this persuasive work. It requires that they “specify the unjust conditions that must be changed” (Morris and Staggenborg, 2007:183) and identify “those responsible for the situation in which the aggrieved population finds itself” (della Porta and Diani, 2006:75). Both components — problem and source — are important because “directed action is contingent on the identification of the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents,” and consensus on one does not automatically translate into consensus on the other (Benford and Snow, 2000:616). The broader the movement, the more likely this is to be true. At the same time, the prioritization of one problem invariably draws attention away from others, serving to promote a particular interpretation of reality over the alternatives (della Porta and Diani, 2006:76). Methodologically, the concept of diagnostic framing helped reintegrate into analysis the grievances that were often discarded or sidelined as a result of the rejection of breakdown and strain theories of social movement activity. Rather than treating such grievances as objective facts or direct causal triggers, it addresses them as subjective experiences influencing our willingness to act.

Prognostic Framing: Ends and Means, Friends and Foes

Identifying what is amiss with the current state of affairs provides an important starting point for collective action, but on its own it is unlikely to achieve sustained mobilization. A specific grievance or event may provoke protest or unrest, but social movements typically aim at more than simply expressing discontent. Indeed, inherent to

any demand for change is a desire to transform a situation or behaviour *from* one state *to* another. As such, movements looking to have a long-term future arguably need to offer a positive as well as a negative vision. It is precisely this that the concept of prognostic framing aims to capture. Such framing tackles “the Leninesque question of what is to be done. [...It] involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan” (Benford and Snow, 2000:616). Prognostic framing also offers a means of differentiating both movements and factions within movements or organizations: agreement on problems is often easier to reach than agreement on solutions, such that prognostic framing often sheds light on contention within and beyond movements (Wiktorowicz, 2004a:17).

Motivational Framing: From Balcony to Barricades

The identification of problems and preferred solutions may be important components of any mobilization strategy, but by themselves they are insufficient. Movements still face the challenge of transforming spectators into participants (Wiktorowicz, 2004a:18) and moving supporters “from the balcony to the barricades” (Snow and Byrd, 2007:128). Indeed, persuading people to move from agreement to action is one of the greatest difficulties facing movements and their leaders. As Gamson (1992b:6) correctly observes, “one may be completely convinced of the desirability of changing a situation while doubting the possibility of changing it.” Movement leaders need to convince followers that their proposed course of action is legitimate and efficacious, and that the costs are worth bearing in the face of uncertain outcomes (della Porta and Diani, 2006:70). Groups also have to overcome a collective action dilemma, whereby they have limited incentives to participate if they do not know if their individual contribution will make a difference and

can “free ride,” receiving the benefits of group achievement without bearing the costs (Olson, 1971). One of the ways in which groups meet these challenges is through motivational framing, which provides “the rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive” (Benford and Snow, 2000:617).

Entangled with the challenge of mobilization is the question of identity. This concept has long attracted the attention of social movement scholars, with a broad consensus emerging that it is pivotal to any efforts to understand movement dynamics (Snow and McAdam, 2000:41). Della Porta and Diani (2006:94) contend that “collective action cannot occur in the absence of a ‘we’ characterized by common traits and a specific solidarity,” as well as a negative identification of a ‘they.’ Tilly (2003:75) sees the activation and reinforcement of identity boundaries as being responsible for “a significant share” of the collective violence in the cases he considered. Within International Relations scholarship, too, representations of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ are seen as enabling both foreign and domestic policies. Campbell (1992), Neuman (1996) and Hansen (2006), for example, all see state foreign policies as both dependent on the articulation of identity, and as helping produce and reproduce such identities. Building on their work, Wilhelmsen (2017) argues that discursive identity boundaries can be used to legitimize violent practices by the state. In broad agreement with the social movement literature, the identity of the ‘Self’ is seen as dependent on clear differentiation, predominantly in negative terms, from an ‘Other’ (Connolly, 1991). Action and mobilization, in turn, are seen as dependent on the ‘escalation’ of these identity boundaries and the portrayal of the ‘Other’ as a threat to be countered (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998; Croft, 2012; Wilhelmsen, 2017).

At the same time, understandings of identity vary, and no consensus position exists

over how we should define or measure it. It is “what people choose to be, the incalculable” (Melucci, 1996:66-67), the imagined as well as the concrete (Polletta and Jasper, 2001:298). It exists within and between individuals, and it can emerge from within or be imposed from without (Connolly, 1991; Johnston, Laraña and Gusfield, 1994:11-18). Further complicating matters, we inevitably err in referring to identity in the singular, when in reality individuals and groups consist of bundles of identities (White, 2008), the salience of which can change over time. For this reason, many scholars advocate conceiving of identity as an interactive process of construction and negotiation (Melucci, 1996; della Porta and Diani, 2006). These processes are not simply subordinate to motivational framing. Nor, as the previous chapter shows, are considerations of identity confined to social movements, but instead extend beyond any one discipline or domain. Nevertheless, we can see clear overlap between motivational framing and identity when the former is seen as involved in the construction of meaning and the latter as an outcome of meaning construction, and when mobilization — and therefore the success of motivational framing — is seen as dependent on the construction of a common identity. In other words, although we should not collapse identity within motivational framing, we cannot possibly assess such framing without considering how movement actors seek to shape the identities of members.

In the abstract, there is widespread recognition that motivational framing is essential to movement efforts to inspire and legitimize their actions. In practical terms, however, the concept remains underdeveloped, for at least two core reasons. Firstly, motivational framing is entangled with diagnostic and prognostic framing, making it naturally “a more ambiguous task” (Holbrook, 2013:886). The rationale for action, for example, may be implicit in the diagnosis of the problem: If I claim that ‘they’ are torturing and murdering

our women and children, I do not really need to explain that ‘we’ need to do something about it — if we already share a common understanding, this need will be self-evident. Methodologically, however, this makes capturing motivational framing more challenging. Secondly, emotions are an implicit part of motivational framing, yet such emotions are rarely discussed, much less rigorously analysed, and there has been a heavy bias towards the cognitive component of framing (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2000). Emotions are methodologically hard to capture, and their neglect with social movement studies is not accidental:

It is hard to get emotions back into the field partly because they were not merely neutrally absent from it but expelled in an intellectual rebellion [against breakdown and strain theories] that helped give the field its definition (Calhoun, 2001:48).

Emotions, however, are “the ‘stuff’ through which humans are connected with one another and the world around them, colouring thoughts, actions, and judgements” (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2000:80). As Kemper (2001:51) observes, emotions play a key role in the emergence of movements, in shaping relations between them and their targets of action, and in the lives of members. Without accounting for them,

It would be hard to explain how social movements arise, amass critical levels of support, maintain such support in long-enduring campaigns in the face of often intense opposition, and provide means for recruiting and sustaining supporters, both as active members and as favorably disposed publics and bystanders.

Such arguments notwithstanding, objectively capturing and assessing emotions is a huge challenge, particularly when analysing movements whose members are difficult to access — a topic that will be explored further in the next chapter.

Political Opportunities: Capturing Context

The concept of political opportunities, alternatively referred to as political opportunity structures, seeks to capture the broader context in which groups operate and the formal and informal rules that influence their capacity to undertake collective action and affect changes in the status quo. Social movements “do not operate in a vacuum; they belong to a broader social milieu and context characterized by shifting and fluid configurations of enablements and constraints that structure movement dynamics” (Wiktorowicz, 2004a:13). McAdam (1996:27) notes the existence of competing definitions of what constitute political opportunities, but identifies a consensus around three aspects. The first is the “relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system.” Kitschelt (1986:66), for example, differentiates between open and closed “input structures,” which are determined by factors such as the number of political parties and groups able to articulate demands; legislative capacity; the interaction between interest groups and those in power and the opportunity for new interests to emerge; and the existence of mechanisms for managing demands. This aspect captures what are, in essence, the formal rules of the game that social movements must play if they are to affect change. Such formal rules, however, account for only part of the logic of political systems. Indeed, there can be considerable discrepancy between written rules and actual practice, as the case of the Soviet Union — where constitutional freedoms were far broader than actual ones — shows (see, for example, Williams, 2010). The second aspect is the “stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergirds a polity” (McAdam, 1996:27). Here, the focus is on how unified or divided those that have access to power are, and how easy it is for outsiders to influence or join that elite. This encompasses informal as well as formal practices, since such elite do not necessarily occupy formal institutional positions (or their power does not

correspond to or stem from those positions). The third aspect is the “presence or absence of elite allies” (McAdam, 1996:27), which relates to whether movements are able to find factions within the elites who are supportive of or hostile to their interests. To these three aspects McAdam (1996:27) adds a fourth, present in only some definitions: “the state’s capacity and propensity for repression.” This reflects the more direct treatment of those groups that seek to challenge existing structures and policy, and is of particular relevance when considering movements operating outside of the Western liberal democracies that were long the main focus of SMT.

Kitschelt (1986:61-62) identifies several key ways that political opportunity structures may influence collective action. Groups that are able to access information, accumulate the resources on which mobilization depends, and appeal to social norms are better placed to mobilize. Institutional rules determine whether and how these groups can access both decision-making and the public arena. Finally, the treatment of other movements invariably affects groups’ ability to mobilize. Kitschelt argues that closed systems with high implementation (and, consequently, repression) capacity are more likely to witness the emergence of movements pursuing confrontational rather than assimilative strategies. Given the breadth of features covered by the concept of political opportunities, however, identifying those that are available to and influence a movement has proven to be something of a recurring problem. In an oft-cited passage, Gamson and Mayer (1996:275-276) lament:

The concept of political opportunity structure is in trouble, in danger of becoming a sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment [...]. It threatens to become an all-encompassing fudge factory for all the conditions and circumstances that form the context for collective action. Used to explain so much, it may ultimately explain nothing at all.

They argue that part of the problem stems from political opportunities being defined according to need. While this flexibility of definition may be unavoidable — especially since it is important to account for the political opportunities specific to particular movements — Gamson and Meyer call on analysts to be clear on how they are defining and using it. Their call, however, has met with only variable success. They (1996:281), for example, emphasize the importance of cultural components such as legitimacy, political climates, zeitgeist, and the national mood, but have themselves been criticized for adding to the problem by conflating political opportunities with both framing processes and, potentially, non-political opportunities (McAdam, 1996:30). Many of their proposed variables, while important to consider, are difficult to measure. Indeed, it is not uncommon to encounter discussions of political opportunities that give no indication of how the phenomena under discussion are assessed. As such, sections of the social movement literature create the impression that the concept is sometimes used to give an air of rigour to decidedly subjective descriptive passages. Such criticisms notwithstanding, there can be little doubt that political opportunities reference a highly important facet of collective action, without which we risk decontextualizing our discussion of social movement activities.

Mobilizing Structures: Actors and Resources

If the concept of political opportunities aims to assess the sea in which movements swim, then the concept of mobilizing structures provides a mechanism for assessing the swimmers. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996:3) define such structures as “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action.” As they note (1996:1), assessing mobilizing structures is of critical

importance to understanding their evolution, since “movements may largely be born of environmental opportunities, but their fate is heavily shaped by their own actions.” Five core facets of such structures permeate the literature on mobilizing structures and internal movement dynamics: networks, leadership, organizational forms, resources and tactics. In this discussion, we shall concentrate predominantly on the first two.

There exists a broad consensus among social movement scholars that networks play a critical role in efforts to mobilize, acting as predictors of participation: existing links increase the chances of involvement, and involvement itself generates new links (Diani, 2003). The higher the risks associated with the activity of the movement, the stronger these networks may need to be (Diani, 2003) — a factor of obvious importance to considerations of political violence. Della Porta and Diani (2006) argue that social networks can affect decisions to participate in movement activities in several ways. They can provide a group that members feel part of, making actions feel meaningful and relevant. They can provide opportunities to those with a predisposition to an ideology. They can allow participation in group decisions. They can discourage disengagement. And network position can influence the type of involvement. Recognizing the importance of networks, Social Network Analysis (SNA) emerged as a distinct sub-discipline within sociology in the 1950s and 1960s (Carrington and Scott, 2011), and has examined questions beyond those of participation, looking, for example, at the flow of ideas through a movement (Edwards, 2014). The network approach is not limited to a single type of question, nor a single method for answering it (Horne and Horgan, 2012). Rather than a method or a theory, it offers a “perspective” that treats social life as “created primarily and most importantly by relations and the patterns formed by these relations” (Marin and Wellman, 2011:11), and provides a mechanism for interpreting and visualizing those relations. Its primary benefit stems from

offering an analytic perspective that is both objective and replicable, and that “reveals what is hidden in plain sight” (Kadushin, 2012:6).

Networks, however, are rarely fully egalitarian, and different actors may have different statuses within them. As Bousquet (2012:354) notes, some network nodes can be “more connected than others and act as relays for communications or resources between different parts of the network.” Consideration of such hubs leads directly to consideration of the second fact of mobilizing structures, leadership. Within existing literature on social movements, a somewhat paradoxical situation has emerged regarding leadership. On the one hand, there is widespread recognition that leaders play an important role in all types of movements. McAdam (1999:47), for example, observes that, “in the context of political opportunity and widespread discontent, there still remains a need for the centralized direction and coordination of a recognized leadership.” Morris and Staggenborg (2007:171) argue that “leaders are critical to social movements: they inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies, frame demands and influence outcomes.” On the other hand, there has been a lack of theoretical development, an overly narrow focus on particular dimensions of leadership, and a bias towards progressive, left-wing groups operating in the West (Morris and Staggenborg, 2007; Hofman, 2017; Youngman and Moore, forthcoming). This neglect has been fuelled, in part, by a disciplinary preference for bottom-up rather than top-down explanations of social phenomena. Of those authors to have addressed the topic in more detail, it is arguably the work of Melucci (1996:334) that offers the greatest insights. Melucci proposes that,

Leaders act as representatives of the group, guiding its members towards the pursuit of goals and thus providing them with specific advantage. The members endow the leader with status, prestige, and power, and invest their own resources in the collective action. Both partners to this relationship have

expectations concerning the behaviour of the other which must be satisfied.

Critically, this perspective affords the members agency in their relationship: They are not the mindless automatons or dupes so often portrayed in top-down perspectives of groups. Leaders within social movements do not *determine* the ideology of their movements; rather, they *influence* them through a process of negotiation with members in which they may enjoy certain advantages but not complete dominance. Thus, Melucci (1996:334) argues, “if one or both of the parties feel that the exchange is not equitable, there will be an attempt to restore the balance or to break off the relationship.” In other words, if leaders fail to satisfy the expectations of members, they may find that they do not remain leaders for long.

In focusing on networks and leadership, it is important to recognize that these are not the only dimensions of mobilizing structures that can provide insights into ideology. Decentralized structures and limited resources, for example, may impact the leadership’s ability to communicate or impose its ideological preferences or receive and accommodate feedback from members. Resources, moreover, may include not only personnel, time, money, materiel, and information, but also moral and cultural resources such as legitimacy and expertise (Edwards and McCarthy, 2007) and educational capital (Morris and Staggenborg, 2007). Some of these are captured through consideration of leadership, but others are not. Ideological preferences, moreover, may manifest themselves as much through behaviours as through rhetoric. The neglect of these factors here is based on a presumption that they do not provide insights into the role of ideology. Rather, their exclusion is motivated by distinctly practical concerns, as will be explained in the next chapter.

Applying PPT to Ideology

The Relationship Between Framing and Ideology

The boundaries between framing and ideology are frequently blurred. Melucci (1996:349), for example, defines ideology as a “set of symbolic frames which collective actors use to represent their own actions to themselves and to others within a system of social relations.” Indeed, there is considerable overlap between the terms, as the proposal to use one to understand the other suggests. Ideology relates to values and beliefs that provide a framework for interpreting the world, identifying problematic social and political aspects of it, shaping identity, and establishing the principles that guide behaviour. Diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing collectively perform a similar interpretative role. Furthermore, both have a clear communicative dimension: In the case of framing, this is self-evident, but even in the case of ideology it is necessary for values and beliefs to be communicated in one form or another if they are to be shared across individuals (or at least so that both they and we know that they are shared). Master frames — those that transcend individual movements (Snow and Benford, 1992; Snow, 2007) — bear even greater similarity to ideology.

Nevertheless, there are clear reasons for viewing ideology and framing as distinct concepts. First, as already mentioned, not all frames are political. As such, we have to acknowledge the existence of a type of framing distinct from ideology. Second, ideology refers to beliefs: while these may be articulated — which is where framing theory is useful — they may also be held without articulation. Once actors have arrived at a shared understanding, they may not necessarily continue to articulate them. Moreover, groups engaged in illegal activity may cease to communicate for periods of time for a variety of

reasons. Framing theory is poorly placed to interpret silences, and beliefs may manifest themselves in non-verbal ways. Gillan (2008:248) argues that we should look beyond the strategic claim-making that is typically examined by SMT and look as well at “the underlying beliefs about society that motivate them.” Bringing the literature on framing into dialogue with that on ideology offers a means to do this. Third, failing to differentiate between framing and ideology hinders our ability to assess things like deliberate deception. Members of the far-right street protest organization the English Defence League, for example, have been “eager to portray themselves as anti-racist and tolerant of ethnic minorities,” yet they engage in overtly racist activities (Meadowcraft and Morrow, 2016). Similar behaviours were observed with the British National Party (Blee and Taylor, 2002). Oliver and Johnston (2000:46) offer two further valuable considerations. If we treat ideology and framing as synonymous, “we no longer have a vocabulary for distinguishing between the complex set of ideas and its invocation in a particular instance.” Furthermore, the same frame can be used by competing, even diametrically opposed, ideologies. Overall, therefore, merging ideology and framing trivializes and hinders our ability to consider the former. At the same time, frames can originate from and influence ideologies (della Porta and Diani, 2006). Using framing theory to interpret ideology provides us with a rigorous analytical tool for assessing how ideology is articulated over time. Indeed, doing so provides an opportunity to contribute to SMT by examining the relationship between frames and ideology – something largely neglected at the empirical level in the existing framing literature (Oliver and Johnston, 2000; Snow and Benford, 2000).

The Interactive Relationship Between PPT's Components

The three components of Political Process Theory clearly do not exist in isolation from

one another, but are engaged in a continual process of interaction. Mobilizing structures frame the political opportunities available to them (Benford and Snow, 2000:628), and movements' success in mobilizing would-be recruits impacts the composition of those mobilizing structures, which in turn impacts the attitude of the system towards, and thus the political opportunities available to, them. As McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996:8) argue,

In the unlikely event that system-critical framings were to emerge in the context of little or no organization, the absence of any real mobilizing structure would almost surely prevent their spread to the minimum number of people required to afford a basis for collective action. More to the point, however, is a suspicion that lacking organization these framings would never emerge in the first place.

Once a movement has emerged, it becomes part of the environment in which it exists, and “the broader set of environmental opportunities and constraints are no longer independent of the actions of movement groups” (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996:12-13). Moreover, the frames that groups employ are a result of the negotiations between different individuals and groups within movements. They thus not only impact on the composition of mobilizing structures, but are themselves also a reflection of them (Melucci, 1996:355).

Integrating Identity and Ideology

Both within and beyond SMT, there has been limited recognition of the link between ideology and identity, despite the centrality of identity itself to the field. Johnston, Laraña and Gusfield (1994:22), for example, see ideology, grievances and collective identity as analytically separate but sharing a strong bond. Leader Maynard (2015:20), meanwhile, notes that ideologies “always include and appeal to various identities,” and some identities, such as Bolshevik, progressive and so forth, “are explicitly ideological.” Yet, for the most part, the relationship is not only underexplored, but one concept has largely supplanted the

other in political analysis. For instance, Malešević (2006:2) describes identity as one of the key “new hip analytical concepts” to have replaced the mullet of ideology. As he goes on to note (2006:13-14), such is the universality of identity as a concept, anyone who makes “the claim of not having or wanting an identity might be regarded as at best bizarre and at worst as suspicious, immoral or sinister.”

Despite this neglected relationship, it is hard to fully understand ideology without reference to identity. It is difficult to have a vision of how the world should be, and how one should behave to get there, without reference to who should be demonstrating the desired behaviours. People do not generally imagine a future world in which there could be no theoretical space for their desired future selves — even if they do not expect to see such future selves realized (because, for example, their own sacrifice is a necessary precondition of bringing that world into being). Reshaping identities, indeed, “is often a primary movement goal” (Polletta and Jasper, 2001:296), and “actors seek both to differentiate themselves and be recognized by others” (della Porta and Diani, 2006:105-106). McAdam (1986) found that ideological identification is more important for high- versus low-risk activism, and we have good reason to expect this to be even more the case for insurgent social movements. After all, McAdam, like many social movement theorists, focused on a progressive, left wing movement in making this case, and this impacted his understanding of risk. The risks facing those involved in the civil rights project he studied, while high, pale in comparison to sustained involvement in insurgency – and yet they represented the outer limits of his conceptualization. Furthermore, if identity involves a conceptualization of the self and a choice of who we are, then it must surely have a behavioural component if it is to have real-world significance. It is not that the two concepts are not distinct: An ideology may be impossible without an identity, but an identity can clearly exist separately

from an ideology. Here, I disagree with Leader Maynard's (2015) assertion that identities are always ideological. If, as Malešević reasonably asserts, we cannot claim not to have an identity then, per this logic, everything becomes ideological and ideology loses any meaningful explanatory capacity. Rather, by considering the two together, we can better understand ideology as both involving, and being one of the mechanisms through which movement actors seek to shape, identity. If "political entrepreneurs seek to activate and exploit" identity boundaries (Tilly, 2003:75-76), then ideology is one channel through which they may do it.

Applying SMT to Political Violence

The relevance of SMT to insurgencies may not, at first glance, be entirely obvious. After all, insurgencies are often discussed in terms of — and, indeed, themselves adopt the language of — hierarchical, military-style organizations. In some cases, such a portrayal may be accurate. Where insurgencies attain sufficient size and strength to contest territorial control, they may replicate at least some of the structures of the state, including in the organization of their armed forces. For example, Arjona (2016:97) argues that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) both have formal structures with well-defined hierarchies. Smaller groups unable to control territory may also be paramilitary in structure. Alonso (2007) found that the PIRA also employed a strict hierarchy with a clear command-and-control structure, displayed obedience to leadership commands, and crushed internal dissent. In many other cases, however, this military language can be intended to deceive and project an image of a stronger, more resilient organization than exists in reality. Many groups deliberately employ decentralized structures and have weak formal mechanisms for managing internal

processes.

How does an organization's position on the spectrum of centralization affect the relevance of an SMT perspective? Some aspects of Political Process Theory are more clearly applicable than others. All organizations, for instance, face the challenge of framing the conflicts they are involved in and trying to shape perceptions of the world in their preferred direction. Groups engaged in violent, illegal activity may face different framing challenges: Where the barricades are literal and the costs of failure high to the point of fatality, for example, there may be a greater burden on motivational framing (except where groups can compel participation). Nevertheless, the broad theoretical framework still applies, and all violent groups have an interest in portraying their struggle as legitimate. Consequently, a framing perspective has been successfully applied in both social movement and discourse studies, and to state as well as non-state actors (e.g. Campana, 2009; Campana and Légaré, 2010). Insurgent movements, like their non-violent counterparts, are likewise affected by the formal and informal rules of the environments in which they operate. It is in considering mobilizing structures that the greatest questions and challenges may arise. All organizations need to marshal a range of resources, and consideration of tactics may be applied equally to all actors. Shapiro (2012:7) finds rich evidence to support the dominant idea in existing literature that groups engaged in terrorism "strive to match means and ends given limited and imperfect information about the world." However, the relationship between leaders and followers is clearly going to be highly affected by the presence or absence of organizational mechanisms to enforce obedience. In some cases, therefore, network perspectives may only generate limited insights, and it may be inappropriate to conceive of leadership as a negotiated relationship where both parties enjoy agency.

Furthermore, the benefits of an SMT perspective stem in part from how social movements themselves are conceived. The concept is a flexible one — such that Crossley (2002:2) proposes adopting an approach of Wittgensteinian family resemblance, where movements share overlapping features — allowing it to generate insights on different types of movements. Surveying a range of definitions, Snow, Soule and Kriesi (2007:6) identify a number of commonalities: they engage in collective action that is extra- or non-institutional; they display a degree of organization; they are oriented towards change; and they display a degree of temporal continuity. Della Porta and Diani (2006:20), meanwhile, propose conceiving of social movements as a process consisting of three core mechanisms: they “are involved in conflictual relations with clear opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; [and] share a distinct collective identity.” Such mechanisms are self-evidently applicable to organized groups engaged in political violence. Beck (2008:1569-1572), for example, notes that such groups often face “organizational and resource dilemmas similar to [non-violent] social movements, if not more acute”; they can employ organizational structures — with a professionalized core providing leadership to a diffuse support base — that are reminiscent of social movements; they are similarly dependent on an interactive relationship with their environments; and they both devote considerable resources to justifying their activities. Moreover, Gunning (2009:156-157), who echoes many of the same points, observes that an SMT perspective can help “de-exceptionalise” violence and integrate “macro, meso, and micro level explanations, something for which terrorism research has been critiqued for not systematically doing.”

This dissertation contends that an SMT perspective can generate insights into insurgencies regardless of organizational types, even if a degree of methodological adaptation is necessary and certain challenges faced by violent social movements may be

exaggerated when compared to their non-violent counterparts. A priori agreement on the nature of the organization under consideration is not a prerequisite for accepting the analytical insights that SMT can provide. This is, moreover, far from the first study to apply SMT to violent political groups. Efforts to enrich our understandings of political violence and address some of the shortcomings of existing research have resulted in the development of typologies of militant organizations (Marsden, 2016); explorations of leadership and recruitment processes (della Porta, 1988; Gentry, 2004; Sageman, 2008); and examinations of the communication strategies and ideologies of myriad actors and groups (Page, Challita and Harris, 2011; Wagemakers, 2012; Holbrook, 2013, 2014). Nor is the contribution unidirectional: Research into violent political actors can enrich understandings of social movements by expanding them beyond their primary focus on Western and democratic settings (Wiktorowicz, 2004a; Beck, 2008). Such cross-disciplinary work, however, remains very much in its infancy, particularly with regard to “terrorism studies”: Of 1,569 articles listed on Web of Science in the two core terrorism journals, *Terrorism and Political Violence* and *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Gunning (2009:156) identified only six returns from a keyword search for “social movement.” The same search in late 2016 returned only 18 results.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I outlined how the role of ideology is largely neglected or downplayed in existing understandings of political violence, and why this marginalization is problematic. I also noted a number of recurring problems in, and legitimate criticisms of, the work that does seek to treat ideology as a subject worthy of study. This chapter has illustrated that SMT provides a theoretical perspective that can help address these

shortcomings and move the debate forward. Framing theory provides us with a mechanism by which we can rigorously capture and analyse the articulation of ideology, thereby considering the perspectives of the insurgent actors themselves — so often cynically ignored in discussions of political violence — and the role they play in negotiating and shaping meaning. It also enables us to integrate identity into the discussion, without which one cannot speak of an ideology. In giving voice to the perspectives of actors, we help to address one of the recurring problems in the study of ideology, namely the tendency to treat movements as some kind of unitary force rather than a collection of actors with their own agency and agendas, while still recognizing that leaders can play a role distinct from that of other movement members.

One of the strengths, meanwhile, of an SMT perspective is that it encourages, even compels, a rich, contextualized understanding of movements. The combination of mobilizing structures and political opportunities, therefore, enables us to consider both the internal dimensions of movements and the external contexts in which they operate. Through this, we can understand the content of ideologies and how they interact with internal and external factors to construct meaning within movements. This, in turn, helps us avoid another of the problems highlighted by Gunning, namely the assumption that ideology exists as some kind of autonomous force, independent of the circumstances in which it is articulated and the actors who articulate it. A contextualized reading of movements, however, requires detailed empirical data. In the next chapter, we shall introduce the case studies and unique datasets to be considered and articulating a methodology for the practical application of the study of ideology, and the challenges that arise with it.

Chapter Three

Interpreting Ideology and Political Violence in the North Caucasus

Introduction

The first two chapters of this dissertation identified a broad theoretical problem, the neglect of ideology in considerations of political violence, and proposed SMT as a potential pathway to addressing it. SMT, however, draws its strength not from abstract theoretical discussions, but from in-depth empirical studies of specific cases (della Porta, 2008). This chapter articulates a justification and a methodology for exploring how and why ideologies evolve in practice through the application of SMT to the insurgency that operated in Russia's North Caucasus, focusing on the period between 2007 and 2015. This insurgency, in many ways, makes for an ideal case study, having experienced significant change in movement composition and local and global contexts, both prior to, and during, this period. The period in question, moreover, constitutes a distinct phase within the insurgency's evolution, namely the lifespan of the Caucasus Emirate (*Imarat Kavkaz*, IK). The insurgency's ideology during this phase — and, to an extent, the North Caucasus as a whole (Kemoklidze et al., 2012) — has been largely neglected and, where addressed, understood in highly simplistic and reductionist terms. As such, it provides us with an opportunity to contribute both to empirical knowledge and broader theoretical debates.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first section explores the origins of the North Caucasus insurgency, surveying its operational and its ideological evolution. The second section examines how existing literature treats the ideology of the IK, demonstrating that

such treatment is characterized largely by neglect, fundamental misunderstandings, and a failure to seriously consider the insurgency's own voices. The third section sets out the methodological approach of this study, justifying its parameters and the approach that will be used to assess framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities across the selected parts of the insurgency.

The Regionalization and Islamization of a Conflict

The Chechen Wars and Their Impact

The contemporary North Caucasus insurgency traces its origins to the First and Second Chechen Wars (1994-1996 and 1999-2002). The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI), under the leadership of former Soviet Air Force general Dzhokhar Dudayev, unilaterally proclaimed its independence from the collapsing Soviet Union in late 1991, giving rise to growing conflict with the re-emerging Russian state (Evangelista, 2002). The First Chechen War began in December 1994 when Russia, on the orders of President Boris Yeltsin, attempted to 'restore constitutional order' and bring Chechnya back under Moscow's control. What was intended, in Russian Security Council Secretary Oleg Lobov's infamous phrase, as a "small victorious war" (Gall and de Waal, 1997) was, in fact, neither small nor victorious. Marked by considerable brutality and extensive human rights violations, it ended in August 1996 with the signature of the Khasavyurt Accords, which provided for Russia's withdrawal from Chechnya and a five-year deferral of its constitutional status.

Chechnya's 'victory' in this war was pyrrhic. Dudayev having been killed in its latter stages, leadership of the ChRI passed first to Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev and then — following presidential elections in 1997 — to Aslan Maskhadov, the former Soviet Army general who had overseen the military victory. Maskhadov faced a formidable array of

problems: a destroyed economy and infrastructure; a traumatized and displaced population; a lack of money and external support; and a proliferation of paramilitary groups vying for influence (Sokirianskaia, 2014:94-95). His ability to resolve them was undermined by a lack of aid for reconstruction, the non-payment of pensions and money for basic services, and Moscow's failure to honour its obligations under the Khasavyurt Accords (Wilhelmsen, 2004:50-51). Moscow's position, too, changed, particularly following Vladimir Putin's ascension first to the premiership in 1999 and then to the presidency the following year. Putin framed Chechnya as an existential threat, abandoning earlier depictions of Maskhadov as a partner (Wilhelmsen, 2017). Amid widespread instability and criminality in Chechnya on the one hand, and political determination from the new Russian leadership on the other, Russia renewed the war. A brutal military campaign (see Gilligan, 2010) saw the ChRI leadership driven from Grozny into the forests and mountains.

Although there is no consensus on the end date of the Second Chechen War, the separatists transitioned to insurgent tactics following their retreat from Grozny in early 2000, and the war as such could be considered over by the time Putin terminated the military phase of the operations in April 2002. The conflict, however, continued, with Maskhadov insisting that the ChRI remained the legitimate authority in Chechnya right up until his death in March 2005. Now refusing to recognize that authority, Moscow pursued its own policy of 'Chechenization,' installing a pro-Russian Chechen administration under the leadership of first Chechen Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov and then — following Akhmad's assassination in May 2004 and a period of transition — his son Ramzan (Russell, 2014). The conflict, meanwhile, increasingly spread beyond Chechnya's boundaries to the neighbouring North Caucasian republics, both as a result of a deliberate strategy by Chechen rebel leaders and the preferences of actors in those republics (Campana and

Ratelle, 2014). Maskhadov's successor, Abdul-Khalim Sadulayev, formalized the regionalization of the conflict with the proclamation in May 2005 of the Caucasus Front. Sadulayev's tenure, however, was relatively short-lived, and with his death in June 2006 the leadership passed to Dokka Umarov, the man who a year later abolished the ChRI and proclaimed in its stead the Caucasus Emirate.

From Nationalist-Separatism to Jihadism

This study focuses on the ideology of the insurgency under the banner of the IK; as such, a comprehensive study of the evolution of pre-IK ideology falls outside its remit. Nevertheless, this evolution forms part of the vital historical context in which the IK emerged. The majority of academics and observers interpret the core ideology of the first war as nationalist-separatism, with Islam playing only a secondary, instrumental role (Hughes, 2007). Sokirianskaia (2008:116), for example, argues that the first war was "anti-colonial" in nature, with "national liberation" the core organizing idea for the rank-and-file fighters who fought it. For Hughes (2007:24), "the evidence demonstrates that Dudaev, Yandarbiev, and other nationalist leaders were driven by a secular vision of nation-state building." Although Dudayev's decrees as ChRI president made symbolic references to Islam, they did not make a meaningful effort to Islamize the state. Instead, Dudayev's "use of Islam was often correlated with moments of extreme urgency" (Hughes, 2007:66-68). Supporting this view, Wilhelmsen (2004, 2005) sees Dudayev as first deploying Islamic rhetoric in the face of the Russian invasion, and as using it exclusively as a mobilizing tool to resist alleged Russian aggression. Indeed, the conflict is often not discussed in predominantly ideological terms; instead, it was Russia's decision to use force rather than the ideas Dudayev propagated that are seen as rallying support behind his regime

(Campana, 2009).

Such instrumental interpretations can only be understood in the context of the region-wide Islamic revival that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. The entire North Caucasus sought to rediscover its historic Muslim identity and reconnect to the Islamic world — something that has been interpreted as a response to both the ensuing political and intellectual liberalization and a structural and ideological crisis (Yemelianova, 2001). The revival was particularly intense in the northeastern Caucasus, where Islam's roots were historically much deeper (Yemelianova, 2014). With the removal of restrictions on both travel and religious practice, the practice and propagation of various strands of Islam proliferated, and an increasing number of individuals obtained a religious education abroad (Bobrovnikov, 2001; Akkiyeva, 2014).

In Chechnya, however, these processes occurred in the context of war and its aftermath, which “accelerated the Islamization of Chechen politics and policies” (Gammer, 2011:87-88). Within the Chechen separatist movement, a loose Islamist camp formed and rose to prominence in the inter-war period, as field commanders and Maskhadov's defeated rivals in the presidential election coalesced around an increasingly radical Islamist agenda. A critical role in the growing influence of the Islamist camp — and a key factor influencing interpretations of the insurgency's ideology — was played by the transnational activists and fighters who travelled to the region from 1993 onwards. Most significantly, in 1995 the young Saudi veteran of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan, Samir Salih Abdallah al-Suwaylim, better known by his nom-de-guerre Khattab, arrived with eight other Afghan-Arabs. This group allied with influential local field commanders like Shamil Basayev and helped establish a transnational activist community (Moore and Tumelty, 2008:416-417). While their military impact on the outcome of the first war was negligible, the ideas that

they introduced, the adoption and adaptation of those ideas by indigenous actors, and the financial resources that they channelled all proved crucial in the inter-war period (ibid).

The Islamist wing of the insurgency repeatedly challenged Maskhadov's authority, and the invasion of Dagestan in autumn 1999 by Khattab and Basayev provided the *casus belli* for the Second Chechen War. The war, in turn, "propelled Islam into dominating the resistance" (Gammer, 2011:88). Although the influence of foreign fighters and activists peaked in the interwar years (Moore and Tumelty, 2008), by this point the Islamist influence was well-established. The regionalization of the conflict, too, influenced its ideological evolution, as the preferences of local actors in the neighbouring republics influenced the position articulated by the Chechen leadership (Campana and Ratelle, 2014). Maskhadov himself vacillated between appeasing and suppressing the Islamists (Wilhelmsen, 2004), but his position was weakened by a lack of external support and the loss of many allies (Moore, 2010) — in part, a deliberate strategy by Moscow to radicalize the conflict and perceptions of it (Campana, 2013; Wilhelmsen, 2017). Maskhadov's death in 2005 arguably "opened the way for the completion of the Islamization process" (Hughes, 2007:105) and struck a major blow to the legitimacy of Ichkerian statehood (Akhmadov and Daniloff, 2013:255). The short duration of Sadulayev's tenure as Maskhadov's successor, coupled with what we know about Maskhadov's balancing act and often contradictory policies, limits the conclusions that we can draw about his intentions for the insurgency's ideology. Nevertheless, Ilyas Akhmadov, former ChRI foreign minister, reasonably argues that Sadulayev was probably laying the groundwork for proclaiming the IK (Akhmadov with Lanskoy, 2010). Instead, that step fell to Umarov, and in doing so he formalized the victory of the Islamist wing over nationalist-separatists in its historic Chechen core.

Ideology Neglected and Misunderstood

Towards the Global Jihadist Movement?

Whereas scholars who study the North Caucasus have explored the transformation of the conflict from a Chechen nationalist struggle to a regionalized conflict waged under the banner of jihad in some detail, the characteristics and evolution of the insurgency's ideology under the banner of the IK have largely been neglected. Such discussions as have occurred have focused predominantly on the insurgency's relationship with the so-called "global jihadist movement." Building on earlier work, some scholars argued that the adoption of a more explicitly jihadist agenda made manifest the insurgency's alignment with the movement in general and AQ in particular. Hahn, the most prominent proponent of this view, argues (2014:loc 96) that the IK is now a "full-blown jihadi terrorist network allied with the global jihadi revolutionary movement, having very little, if anything, to do with Chechen or any other kind of nationalist separatism." Hahn's contribution — while highly polemical, failing to engage honestly with other academic works, and appearing with increasing frequency outside peer-reviewed channels — has proved highly influential in shaping the debate about the IK's ideology. In a more balanced contribution, Sagramoso (2012:593) has asserted that the IK is guided by "similar, if not identical," beliefs and shares AQ's "strategic objectives — the establishment of an Islamic state in the Caucasus, to be ruled by Islamic *Shari'ah* law." Per her view, the ideologies propagated by radical Salafis inspire the involvement of fighters across the region and beyond. Echoing this last point, Aksyumov (2012) has called for much greater attention to be paid to the ideological dimensions of the conflict, arguing that it is ideology that inspires the insurgency and attracts new recruits. Toft and Zhukov (2014), in turn, see ideology as influencing the

operational behaviour of groups, positing that Islamist groups are able to call on a broader support base than nationalist ones and are therefore less susceptible to targeted counterinsurgency measures.

These authors do not propose ideology as the sole factor influencing participation and behaviour, but they undoubtedly afford it a prominent role. Ideological explanations, however, have not been the dominant approach used to understand the contemporary insurgency. Much of the literature that directly addresses the subject of ideology either predates or only briefly postdates the proclamation of the IK, and, in more recent work, ideology is often addressed contextually, rather than as the primary focus of study. Instead, root cause explanations have been the standard framework through which the insurgency has been understood. Campana and Ratelle (2014:128), for example, argue that corruption, religious oppression, security service abuse, and criminal interests help explain decisions to join insurgent groups. Although these groups “accept and use a common ideology,” their commitment to it is portrayed as superficial, and they are seen as focused on “short-term objectives, such as resource extraction and survival.” Such an explanation leans heavily towards the root cause perspectives on ideology outlined in the first chapter, with traces of instrumentalism. Separately, Ratelle (2014c) takes rhetorical alignment with the global jihad as a given but insists the “motivations of fighters in Chechnya and outside of the republic do not reflect the grand strategy put forward in the discourse of the leaders of the Caucasus Emirate.” Instead, he attributes mobilization to social protest, grievances, and a desire for community. The International Crisis Group (2012, 2016) has been a major voice on the region, issuing several substantive reports, and they too have prioritized root cause explanations. More explicitly in the instrumentalist vein, Knysh (2012:329) interprets the decision to establish the IK as designed to attract “the resources of rich Islamist states and

charities worldwide,” and to unify the regional resistance in the face of Russian military power. Schaefer (2010:20) simultaneously argues that ideology is a crucial prerequisite for insurgency — “the kindling that lights the log” — while downplaying insurgents’ normative commitments to content.

Misunderstanding Jihadism

Clouding debates over the insurgency’s ideology has been a failure to critically engage with broader debates about jihadism. Works originating from within the field of Russian studies have often simply imported ideas without reflecting on their applicability to the North Caucasus. While acknowledging the heterogeneity within the global jihadist movement, Sagramoso’s focus on end goals, for example, overemphasizes commonalities in jihadist ideologies — such goals frequently being “vague, similar and utopian” and used to justify highly divergent strategies (Hegghammer, 2009b:259). Authors who both advance and reject the claim that the IK was, to all intents and purposes, an AQ affiliate have uncritically accepted the very existence of a “global jihadist movement.” This concept is largely the creation of Western policy and analysis (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn, 2012) and carries with it problematic connotations of an ideological unity that has always been conspicuous by its absence in the diverse and factionalized landscape of jihadism. If a degree of consolidation and conformity has emerged within this landscape, it cannot be viewed independently of the circumstances that produced it. In other words, the “global jihadist movement” is largely a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Equally problematic, some scholars discuss the ideology of the IK using imported concepts drawn from the study of predominantly Arabic-speaking groups operating in the Middle East and North Africa, concepts that don’t actually work when applied to the North

Caucasus. Campana and Ratelle (2014), for example, debate whether the IK is focused on the “near” or “far enemy,” which typically refer, respectively, to the Muslim rulers of the Middle East and the US or, more broadly, the West (Gerges, 2009). This neglects the critically important point that Russia is not a Muslim country, and there are at least three key layers of actors: the local Muslim rulers, non-Muslim Russia, and the non-Muslim West. Characterizing Russia as the “near enemy” is inappropriate when religion is a key distinguishing characteristic in the original dichotomy, whereas painting it as the “far enemy” prevents any consideration of a transnational dimension of the conflict. Debates about the ideological priorities of the IK have often lacked analytic sophistication in their treatment of the broader ideological trend it supposedly follows.

Other problems have arisen with regard to the correct terminology to refer to strands of radical Islamist thought, and these extend beyond debates about both the ideological orientation of the IK and the North Caucasus region itself. In the earlier phases of the conflict, scholarship — and political conversations in the region — often referred to radical manifestations of Islam as “Wahhabism.” This tended to be deployed as “an undifferentiated catch-all phrase to denote any form of Islam which is perceived to diverge from the traditional Russian Islam” (Dannreuther, 2010:19). It is a term of questionable accuracy, representing a strand of Islamist thought that is most readily associated with the official ideology of Saudi Arabia, where it legitimizes rather than challenges the rule of the state (Meijer, 2009). In more recent academic discourse, the term Wahhabism has largely fallen out of fashion, yet it has mostly been supplanted by the term “Salafism.” This refers to a broad movement adhering to a “more literalist and more puritan approach to Islamic doctrine and practice” (Hegghammer, 2009b:249). Salafism enjoys a complicated relationship with Wahhabism (Wiktorowicz, 2006; Meijer, 2009), but it is inaccurate to

treat the two as synonymous, and in both cases the terms tell us little about adherents' attitudes to violence. As Hegghammer (2009b:250) notes, "the crucial problem with the term Salafism, therefore, is that it is a *theological*, not a political category. Used on its own, it says very little about the political preferences of the actors described as Salafis."

The debate about specifically violent manifestations of radical Islam, in turn, gives rise to the use of the term "Salafi Jihadism" and its variants. Yet this label is also hugely problematic. On the one hand, as Ramsay (2013:53) notes, groups like Hamas advocate jihad but are not considered in any way Salafist, and key "jihadist" thinkers such as Abdallah Azzam were not Salafis in the Wahhabist sense of the term; indeed, Azzam's guidance to submit to local Islamic practices directly contradicts fundamentalist Salafi interpretations. Thus, just as Salafism and Wahhabism are distinct, so too are Salafism and Jihadism, and we can point to the existence of non-Salafi jihadists. The term, moreover, forces us to consider actors in theological terms, since a Salafi by definition cannot be indifferent to theological debates. This, however, leaves us poorly positioned to understand those jihadists who might be unaware of or disinterested in theological debates. In other words, using the term Salafi-Jihadism prejudices our ability to consider ideology and motivation from the outset.

Furthermore, the term "Salafi jihadism" is ethically problematic for positioning Salafi communities as the source of jihadism, ignoring the significance of many Salafis' decision not to engage in violence and legitimizing state persecution of them. A potential resolution to this problem is to decouple Salafism and Jihadism, and focus on the latter as a political rather than theological concept. Jihadism refers to "forms of Islamist militancy defined above all by a commitment to violence ostensibly in the name of Islam" (Deol and Kazmi, 2012:1). It is undoubtedly both "clumsy and controversial," deriving as it does from an

important religious concept that enjoys much broader legitimacy than jihadism itself (Brachman, 2009:4). It is also potentially dehumanizing, at least in the way that it is employed in Western discourse as a means of delegitimizing Islamic resistance. Nevertheless, it is widely employed and useful for emphasizing its adherents' focus on violence (Brachman, 2009:4-5), and none of the alternatives that have been proposed have gained much traction — and usually introduce additional problems into the bargain. As such, while we should acknowledge it is a term that is far from perfect, it represents the least problematic of the available options.

Neglecting Insurgent Voices

A further problem with debates about the IK's ideology is that there has been little by way of serious consideration of the actual content of that ideology, and consequently of what the insurgents themselves have to say. Indeed, it is not uncommon to encounter assertions about ideology that make no reference to either primary source material or studies drawing on the same. Schaefer (2011) and Al-Shishani (2011), for example, both discuss the insurgency's ideology without reference to anything produced by the insurgency itself. Williams (2008), in seeking to assess AQ's impact on the insurgency, is almost entirely reliant on secondary reporting. Souleimanov (2011) devotes a section of a paper to the ideology of the insurgency, the sole supporting evidence for which is a single article from prominent rebel website Kavkazcenter and a news report on the IK's proclamation. In some cases, authors making claims about ideology in background discussions reference other literature that has not actually examined the question of ideology, much less cited primary sources — creating a stale information loop. Cunningham (2008:91), for example, draws on Speckhard and Akhmedova (2006:440) to

claim that “the Chechen case emphasizes nationalism and separatism ‘which is linked ideologically to the global Salafi jihad but fine-tuned to fit local circumstances.’” Yet Speckhard and Akhmedova’s work is a psychological study of the motivations of Chechen suicide attackers, not a study of the insurgency’s ideology. As Moore (2012a:783) notes, a reliance on secondary literature can be highly problematic, given that it is “frequently unreliable, especially in conflating different groups, aims and motives.” Scholarship on the North Caucasus manifests many of the problems found in the broader literature on political violence, where the perspectives of the state and victims are prioritized (Kalyvas, 2006; Staniland, 2014), but is no less problematic for doing so.

In other cases, authors rely on media reporting, sometimes failing to understand either its production or the groups themselves. Toft and Zhukov (2014), for instance, seek to assess behavioural differences between Islamist and nationalist groups, but draw on a single news source, Kavkazskiy Uzel, to construct their database. Kavkazskiy Uzel certainly represents the best media outlet covering the region, but it typically only attributes actions if its own sources make such an attribution; it does not usually make such a determination itself. Where a group is “unknown or unidentified” — which is consequently the majority of cases — Toft and Zhukov claim to classify cases on the basis of targeting, pursuit of explicitly Islamist or nationalist objectives, or the use/non-use of Islamist rhetoric. How such a determination can be made if a group is unknown or unidentified, as well as what constitutes Islamist rhetoric in circumstances where all actors reference their Islamic identity and Sufis have their own conceptualization of jihad, is left unexplained. To a large degree, scholarship on the region is plagued by a “we know it when we see it” approach to ideology, and the labelling of an actor as “jihadist” serves as an obstacle to understanding because questions about what that means are considered self-evident and resolved. The

regional dynamics of the conflict have also mostly been ignored or studied in isolation. Despite recognition that regional actors have had a significant impact on the ideological orientation of the conflict (Campana and Ratelle, 2014), there has been no consideration of what those local ideologies consist of or how they relate to the movement as a whole. Instead, there has been a tendency to take Chechnya as a proxy for the region.

On the rare occasions where scholars have consulted primary source material, they have tended to focus on a relatively small number of actors and neglected systematic methodologies for assessing their output. In particular, much attention has focused on the English-language output of Kavkazcenter, and on isolated statements by the senior-most insurgent leaders, such as Umarov (e.g. Pokalova, 2016; Rivas and Tarín, 2016; Sanz, 2017). This is problematic for several reasons. First, Kavkazcenter has always represented a faction within the insurgency, often — particularly in the early stages of the conflict — pursuing its own agenda and trying to shape both the direction and perceptions of the insurgency’s ideology. There is, therefore, a historical revisionism at play in treating it as the main voice of the insurgency from its very inception. Even in the IK era, when the conflict with nationalist-separatists had already been won, it has at times clearly displayed preferences at odds with the insurgency leadership on the ground, especially during two periods of evident leadership tensions.¹ Yet this agency is rarely acknowledged. Second, Kavkazcenter’s English-language material represents curated content clearly intended for a different audience to its more extensive Russian-language version. The two versions will

¹ In 2010, an IK representative announced the suspension of Movladi Udugov as head of the movement’s “Information and Analysis Service” as result of Kavkazcenter’s decision to publish Umarov’s resignation video, which heralded the start of the 2010-2011 leadership split (Kavkazcenter, 2010c). In 2015, Chechen emir Aslan Byutukayev (Khamzat) expressed condolences on the death of IK leader Kebekov and pledged allegiance to IS. Kavkazcenter’s version of his video address, however, edited out the section with the pledge of allegiance (Youngman, 2016).

therefore potentially paint very different ideological pictures, yet many scholars rely on the English-language version without acknowledging these differences — not least because many are unwilling to admit that they use it not because it is the best available source, but because they lack sufficient language skills to interrogate the Russian material. Third, it has always been possible to support entirely contradictory conclusions through selective citation that removes material from its communicative context. As Akhmadov (and Daniloff, 2013) noted, there is often a duality to messages, influenced by intended audience and context. We cannot resolve these contradictions in the absence of a clear methodology as to how they were reached. Yet the only authors, beyond myself, to have systematically analysed insurgency-produced, Russian-language material are Campana and Ducol (2015) in their study of the IK's websites. The result of this broad neglect is that we are left with a simplistic and undifferentiated understanding of the insurgency's ideology. Jihadism is treated as an unchanging constant, even though there were clear changes in the leadership's ideological positioning of the movement (Youngman, 2019) and the repercussions of the Syrian conflict ultimately led to the IK being supplanted as the main insurgent force in the region by groups loyal to another jihadist actor, IS (Youngman, 2016). If we are to develop a more complete understanding of the IK's ideology, and the role it plays, we need to integrate actors' own voices and systematically analyse their contribution. It is to this task that we now turn.

Applying SMT to the Ideology of the North Caucasus Insurgency

Case Selection

The case study method is widespread in the study of social movements, to the degree that Snow and Trom (2002) claim the two can be regarded as almost synonymous. Gerring (2017:27) defines a case as any “a spatially and temporally delimited phenomenon of theoretical significance,” one that comprises the type of phenomenon that an inference seeks to explain. Snow and Trom (2002) likewise characterise a case as a bounded social phenomenon, the analysis of which seeks to generate a ‘thick description’ of it in the Geertzian sense, and which typically achieves its goals through recourse to multiple methods and layers of analysis. The key advantages of a case study approach lie in its ability to offer in-depth, complex examinations of the phenomena studied, combining levels of analysis to achieve strong internal validity (Gerring, 2017). The following discussion will justify the parameters of the study and the methods that I will employ to achieve a robust study of the phenomenon of interest.

First, however, it is necessary to address one of the key debates surrounding the case study method: case selection and the issue of generalisability, or what Ragin (1992) refers to as “a case of what?” Gerring (2017:272) argues that this represents “the defining question of all case study research,” and that a case must be representative of some larger population in order to have social science value. It is this that he identifies as one of the fundamental weaknesses of the case study method: while they may be able to claim strong internal validity, their narrow focus makes it much harder to make a convincing case that they are representative of a broader population. In a similar vein, Denscombe (2014:54) identifies the aim of the case study as being,

to illuminate the general by looking at the particular [...]. To qualify as something suitable for case study research it is crucial that the thing to be studied has some distinctive identity that allows it to be studied in isolation from its context.

In order to achieve this goal, cases must be selected on the basis of their relationship to the broader population. Orum (2015) identifies three main types of case, based on this relationship: typical of the phenomenon; prototypical, thereby illustrating some potential future development; and deviant, representing a departure from the norm. Those studies that fail to demonstrate a relationship to a broader population are deemed to be of little value from a social scientific perspective.

This debate is problematic in a number of ways, and I reject the underlying philosophical premise that guides much of the discussion. The discussion of how cases are selected is at odds with the reality of much case study research, whereby it is precisely the empirical subject, rather than a broader theory or idea, which is the typical starting point of enquiry. It succumbs to one of the issues identified by Mills (2000), whereby the method is allowed to determine the problem to be studied, rather than the reverse. In other words, this study, like many others, is informed by a conviction that an empirical case can be of value in and of itself, not solely because of its ability to tell us something about a broader population.

More fundamentally, the debate has taken place largely on positivism's terms, rather than articulating a positive interpretivist case that operates on its own terms. Gerring's (2017) defence of the case study, for example, is explicitly positivist, adopting a language of replicability, causality, and hypothesis-testing, and embedding within the discussion the presumption that rigour and systematic approaches are somehow positivist values. Yet, from an interpretivist perspective, claims of replicability and causality are fundamentally

problematic. If we take Denscombe's previously cited assertion, for example, then most interpretivists would reject the idea that any phenomenon can *ever* be studied in isolation from its context. As Schofield (2000:70-71) notes, "at the heart of the qualitative approach is the assumption that a piece of qualitative research is very much influenced by the researcher's individual attributes and perspectives"; as a result, "many qualitative researchers actively reject generalizability as a goal." Although this arguably conflates qualitative and interpretivist perspectives, the logic nevertheless holds true. As Lincoln and Guba (2000) note, the concept of generalization relies, among other things, on a presumption that there are underlying laws and rules that can form the basis for it, and that things can be freed from time and context. This study aligns itself with their proposed solution, which is not to focus on "generalization" in the positivist sense, but on the development of "working hypotheses." Such hypotheses recognize that "there are always factors that are unique to the locale or series of events that make it useless to generalize therefrom," and that transferability depends on a detailed understanding of the contexts both *from* and *to* which ideas are being transferred (Lincoln and Guba, 2000:38-39). This study, therefore, seeks to understand the nature and circumstances of the ideological evolution of the North Caucasus insurgency, which may then provide the basis for working hypotheses about how ideology may function in other milieus.

Temporal Boundaries

In order to conduct case study analysis, it nevertheless remains necessary to establish clear temporal and geographic boundaries for our unit of study. On a temporal level, this is a relatively easy task. The proclamation of the IK in late 2007 was a watershed moment, formalizing the regionalization of the conflict and abolishing the ChRI. An end date is

equally easy to identify: By mid-2015, the IK had lost most of its leadership to a combination of defections and security service operations, and the death in August 2015 of its third and last known emir, Magomed Suleymanov (Abu Usman Gimrinskiy), signalled the final demise of the group. These events are as clear markers of a movement's life cycle as we can hope to find.

Within this life cycle, I orient discussion around three phases. My prior research (Youngman, 2019) identified three distinct phases in Umarov's positioning of the movement. As ChRI president (June 2006-September 2007), Umarov employed nationalist-jihadist framing focused on the liberation of Muslim territory from colonial rule. He portrayed Russia as the main concern within a clear hierarchy, with the North Caucasian authorities secondary and only limited interest in international affairs. The proclamation of the IK heralded a transformation in rhetoric and increasing appeals based on Islamic rather than Chechen identity, but maintained the same broad hierarchy of enemies. However, in approximately late 2010 and lasting until Umarov's death in September 2013, that too changed, with Umarov displaying increased concern with international affairs and blurring — albeit without overturning — the insurgency's priorities. The second and third of these phases fall within the period of study and provide the first and second phase here, albeit with the start of the second moved to early 2010 to reflect republic-level developments within the insurgency. To these another, post-Umarov, phase can be added, in which a six-month vacuum at the apex of the IK was followed by first Aliaskhab Kebekov (March 2014-April 2015) and then Suleymanov increasingly engaging with international affairs and aligning themselves more closely with AQ than had previously been the case — predominantly as a result of the conflict in Syria and Iraq (Youngman, 2016). Using these three phases allows us to compare developments across the IK's constituent parts and

forces us to place temporal change at the centre of our analysis.

Geographical Boundaries

The “formal” boundaries of the IK have never been defined, but a series of administrative edicts issued by Umarov in December 2007 (Umarov, 2007) identified six sub-divisions, or vilayyats. These broadly corresponded to the region’s existing administrative boundaries: Dagestan, Nokhchiycho (Chechnya), G1alg1ayche (Ingushetia), Iriston (North Ossetia), and the United Vilayyat of Kabarda, Balkaria, and Karachay (Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachayevo-Cherkessia, hereafter OVKBK).²



Figure 5. A map of the IK that frequently circulated on jihadist websites and forums. The solid yellow areas designate “territories forming part of the Caucasus Emirate.” The shaded yellow area designates “territory not forming part of a separate vilayyat.” The parallel solid lines denote “state borders” (Ummanews.com, 2013).

² In 2009, Umarov abolished Iriston and merged it with G1alg1ayche (Umarov, 2009).

In reality, IK activity was concentrated in four republics: Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria. In most studies examining the North Caucasus, these would be considered a single “case.” However, treating each republic as a separate case would still satisfy the aforementioned definitions of cases as bounded phenomenon, and considerable differences are masked by the common unifying approach. Indeed, one of the questions this study seeks to answer is the degree to which we should talk about a North Caucasus insurgency or a collection of insurgencies. As such, this study treats Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria as distinct but closely related cases-within-a-case, with a determination as to the degree of unity deferred to the end.

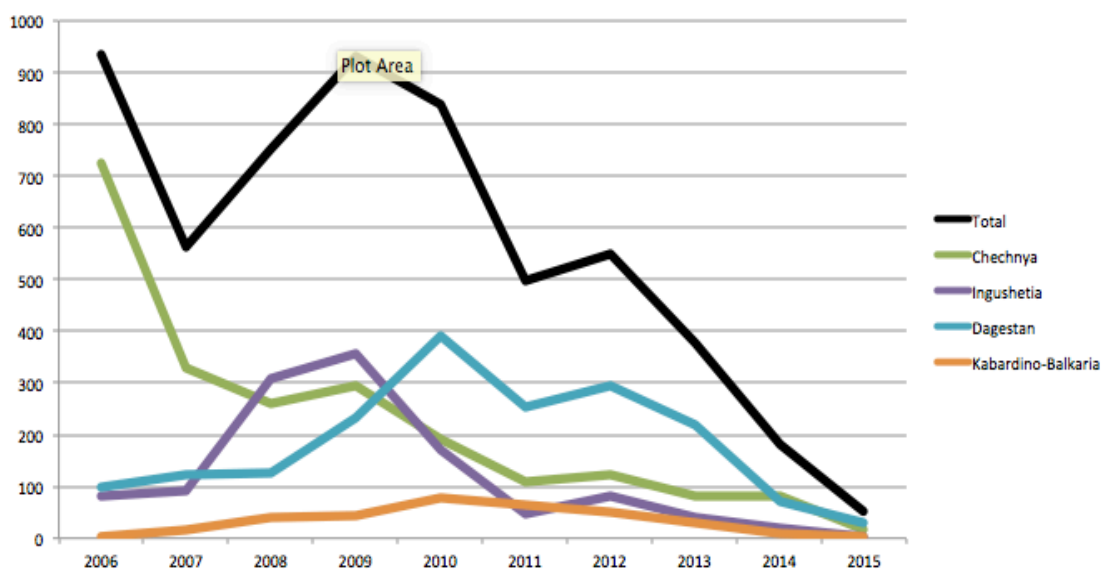


Figure 6. Security service losses by republic and year. Based on data from Memorial (2016a).

Chechnya is excluded for multiple reasons, the most important of which is that, until the death of Umarov in late 2013, the Chechen leadership lacked both a distinct emir and a dedicated “official” website,³ making it difficult to distinguish a “Chechen” ideology separate from that of the central leadership.

³ “Official” status is usually conferred by an edict issued a senior emir. Kavkazcenter is the exception, but it enjoyed de-facto official status as an outlet for top-level communiqués.

Insurgent Actors

A comprehensive study of ideology across all actors and levels of the movement is not feasible. The resources required are prohibitive: the full universe of actors across the lifespan of the IK amounted to several thousand people. The IK's media production has also been prolific. Over the course of many years monitoring the IK, I have constructed a unique corpus of insurgent-produced material that includes textual, video, and audio statements by key ChRI, IK, and Syria-based personnel; and a wealth of additional material. The corpus contains almost 2,000 entries relating to the IK era. To systematically and comprehensively analyse this volume of actors and material would require a team of people, considerable institutional resources, and many years. It is therefore beyond the capacity of a single PhD project. As such, it becomes necessary to select which insurgent actors we want to focus our attention on. Structurally, the IK can be divided into five distinct tiers:

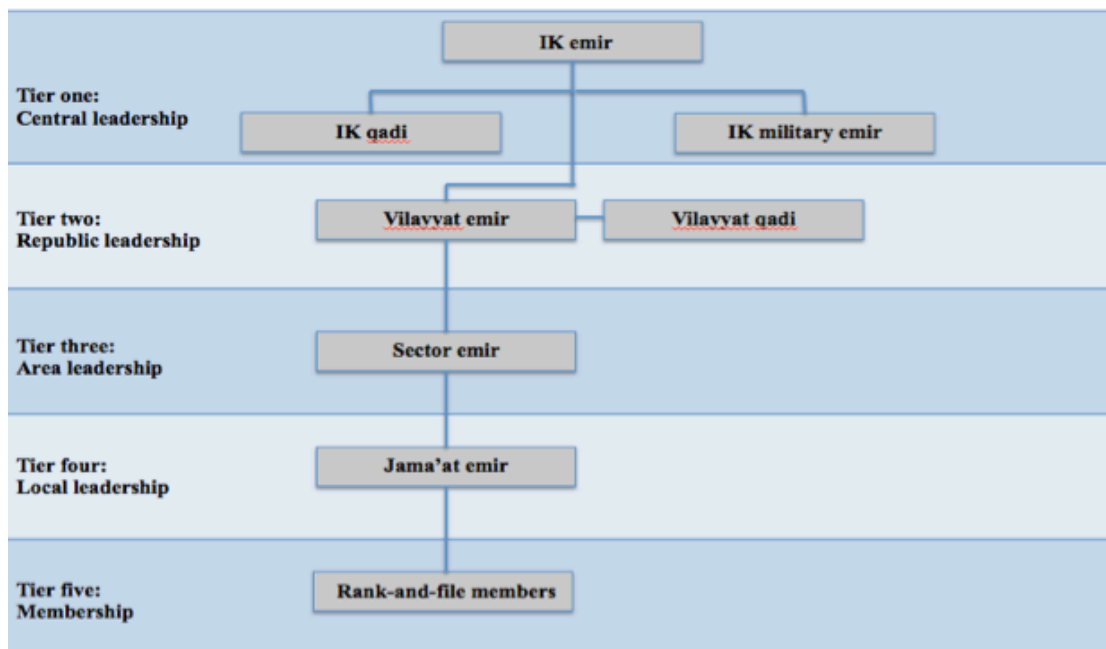


Figure 7. Simplified IK organizational chart

Most leadership positions had a corresponding *naib*, or deputy, and, within this structure,

individuals could cross tiers.⁴ I decided to focus on the second-tier leadership (the emir and *qadi*, or Shari'ah judge) for all cases and — to account for the much larger scale of the insurgency in the republic — the third-tier leadership in Dagestan (the Northern, Central, Southern and Mountain Sector emirs). In total, over the lifespan of the IK, this amounted to 40 actors: 21 vilayyat emirs, three vilayyat qadis, and 16 sector commanders. Additionally, I included Aleksandr Tikhomirov (Said Buryatskiy; d.Mar 10), a key IK ideologist, within the Ingushetian leadership. Tikhomirov did not occupy a formal position within the IK's hierarchy, and his inclusion as a specifically Ingushetian ideologist may appear controversial, given that he was an outsider and closely linked to Umarov. However, a key principle guiding this study is that context matters, and Tikhomirov spent much of his time with the Ingushetian sector of the insurgency, directed high-profile attacks in the republic, and was ultimately killed there.

Several considerations influenced this choice of actors. The position articulated by the IK's emir and its "official" websites have already been covered elsewhere (Youngman, 2016, 2019; Campana and Ducol, 2015), and the potential returns from integrating them into this study do not outweigh the resources required to do so. The exclusion of much of the third- and the entirety of the fourth-tier leadership came down to practicalities. Many of their statements exist only in video format and would require considerable resources to transcribe.⁵ The reasons for, and consequences of, excluding the rank-and-file membership, will be addressed more fully below, and again in the appendix.

⁴ Either as a result of the authority invested in a role (the central leadership shura, for example, comprised the tier one leadership plus the tier two emirs) or by holding two roles simultaneously (e.g. vilayyat emir and IK qadi).

⁵ Their inclusion would also introduce distinct problems of temporal bias: in the absence of routine monitoring as statements are released, older statements issued by lower-ranked members of the movement are less likely to be preserved and circulate in archives and internet forums. Thus, we would invariably end up with much higher quality data towards the end of the study period than the beginning.

Vilayyat Dagestan	
	<p><i>Emir:</i></p> <p>Elgar Malachiyev (Abdul Madzhid; died Sep 08)</p> <p>Umar Sheykhulayev (Muaz; d.Feb 09)</p> <p>Umlat Magomedov (Al Bara; d.Dec 09)</p> <p>Magomed Vagapov (Seyfullakh Gubdenskiy; d.Aug 10)</p> <p>Israfil Validzhanov (Khasan; d.Apr 11)</p> <p>Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Salikh; d.Feb 12)</p> <p>Rustam Asilderov (Abu Mukhammad; d.Dec 14)*</p> <p>Kamil Saidov (Said Arakhanskiy; d.Aug 15)</p>
	<p><i>Qadi:</i></p> <p>Abdulla Saadullayev (Abu Yakhya Davud; d.Sep 09)</p> <p>Magomed Suleymanov (Abu Usman Gimrinskiy; d.Apr 15)</p>
	<p><i>Northern Sector emir:</i></p> <p>Adam Guseynov (d.Jan 11)</p> <p>Makhach Idrisov (d.Jun 11)</p> <p>Magomed Aliyev (Ezhik; d.Jul 11)</p> <p>Daniyal Zargalov (d.Feb 13)</p> <p>Amirkhan Guseynov (Abuzzar; d.Jun 13)</p> <p>Asadulla (d.Dec 14)*</p>
	<p><i>Central Sector emir:</i></p> <p>Magomed Vagapov (Seyfullakh Gubdenskiy; d.Jul 10)</p> <p>Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Salikh; d.May 11)</p> <p>Rustam Asilderov (Abu Mukhammad; d.Aug 12)</p> <p>Murad Zalitinov (Abu Takhir; d.Dec 14)*</p> <p>Omar Magomedov (Umar Balakhanskiy; d.Apr 15)</p>
	<p><i>Southern Sector emir:</i></p> <p>Gasam Abdullayev (Abu Yasir; d.Dec 14)*</p> <p>Kamaldin Kazimagomedov (Abu Abdulla Kasumkentskiy; d.Aug 16)</p>

	<p><i>Mountain sector emir:</i></p> <p>Akhmed Abdulkerimov (Shatun; d.Dec 10)</p> <p>Magomed Suleymanov (Abu Usman Gimrinskiy; d.Apr 15)</p> <p>Gadzhi Abdulayev (Abu Dudzhana Gimrinskiy; d.Aug 15)</p>
OVKBK (Kabardino-Balkaria)	
	<p><i>Emir:</i></p> <p>Anzor Astemirov (Seyfullakh; d.Mar 10)</p> <p>Asker Dzhappuyev (Abdullakh; d.Apr 11)</p> <p>Alim Zankishiyev (Ubeyda; d.Mar 12)</p> <p>Timur Tatchayev (Khamza; d.Jun 12)</p> <p>Ruslan Batyrbekov (Khamzat; d.Sep 12)</p> <p>Khasanbi Fakov (Abu Khasan; d.Aug 13)</p> <p>Tengiz Guketlov (d.Mar 14)</p> <p>Astemir Berkhamov (Al Bar; d.May 14)</p> <p>Zalim Shebzukhov (Salim; d.Aug 16)</p>
G1alg1ayche Wilayah (Ingushetia)	
	<p><i>Emir:</i></p> <p>Ali Taziyev (Magas; d.Jun 10)</p> <p>Dzhamaley1 Mutaliyev (Adam; d.May 13)</p> <p>Artur Gatagazhev (Abdullakh; d.May 14)</p> <p>Beslan Makhauri (Mukhammad; d.Oct 15)*</p>
	<p><i>Qadi:</i></p> <p>Abu Dudzhana (d.Jan 12)</p>
<p><i>Figure 9. The senior leadership of the Caucasus Emirate. Leaders marked with * defected to the Islamic State in 2014-2015, but remain within the study.⁶</i></p>	

⁶ Leadership transition was not always smooth, and there could be considerable delay between the death of a predecessor and the confirmation of a successor, making it difficult to date tenures precisely. At times, role occupants may have been unknown; at others, positions may have been empty.

Framing

In order to assess framing, I collected all textual and video statements that I could find that were attributed to the selected leaders, as well as any issued in the name of the general vilayyat leadership (*komandovaniye*). Data from the aforementioned corpus was supplemented by targeted searches of the “official” IK websites and video-sharing platforms. For each statement, I compiled transcripts of the communiqués. These were either provided by the source itself, transcribed by myself, or translated by a professional translator. Where a Russian-language transcript was available, this was preferred. However, where only an English-language translation was available, this was used to ensure the most efficient use of resources. Some statements, predominantly video ones, could not be sourced, and some — primarily lengthy lectures based on books and other theological tracts by Astemirov and Buryatskiy — were excluded from the analysis on resource grounds. In total, 178 regional leadership communiqués were included in the final analysis:

Vilayyat Dagestan	OVKBK (Kabardino-Balkaria)	G1alg1ayche Wilayah (Ingushetia)
Emir: Malachiyev: 1 (0) Sheykhulayev: 0 (0) Magomedov: 0 (0) Vagapov: 2 (0) Validzhanov: 1 (0) Daudov: 2 (3) Asilderov: 12 (3) Saidov: 2 (0) General leadership: 30 (6)	Emir: Astemirov: 15 (5) Dzhappuyev: 5 (2) Zankishiyev: 1 (0) Tatchayev: 0 (0) Batyrbekov: 0 (0) Fakov: 2 (1) Guketlov: 0 (1) Berkhamov: 1 (1) Shebzukhov: 5 (0) General leadership: 12 (2)	Emir: Taziyev: 2 (0) Mutaliyev: 2 (1) Gatagazhev: 2 (0) Makhauri: 2 (1) General leadership: 38 (2)
Qadi: Saadullayev: 2 (1) Suleymanov: 24 (5)		Qadi: Abu Dudzhana: 2 (0)
Northern Sector emir: Idrisov: 0 (0) Aliyev: 0 (0) Zargalov: 0 (1) Guseynov: 0 (0) Asadulla: 0 (0) Central Sector emir: Vagapov: 0 (0) Daudov: 0 (0) Asilderov: 0 (1) Zalitinov: 1 (0) Magomedov: 0 (1) Southern Sector emir: Abdullayev: 3 (2) Kazimagomedov: 0 (0) General leadership: 1 (0) Mountain sector emir: Abdulkerimov: 0 (0) Suleymanov: (see entry for qadi) Abdulayev: 1 (0)		Other: Tikhomirov: 7 (33)

Figure 9. Leadership communiqués in the corpus. Excluded communiqués indicated in brackets. Where communiqués included more than one speaker, these are counted within the figures for the highest-ranked.

This dataset cannot be presumed to be comprehensive. Internet content is invariably lost over time because of the removal of individual items or entire websites, posing challenges to retrospective data gathering efforts. Such problems are exacerbated by the fact that the Russian and US governments have designated the IK as a terrorist organization, meaning its material is often targeted for removal. Temporal inconsistencies are also a consequence of the decline of the insurgency itself, with a decline in year-on-year output:

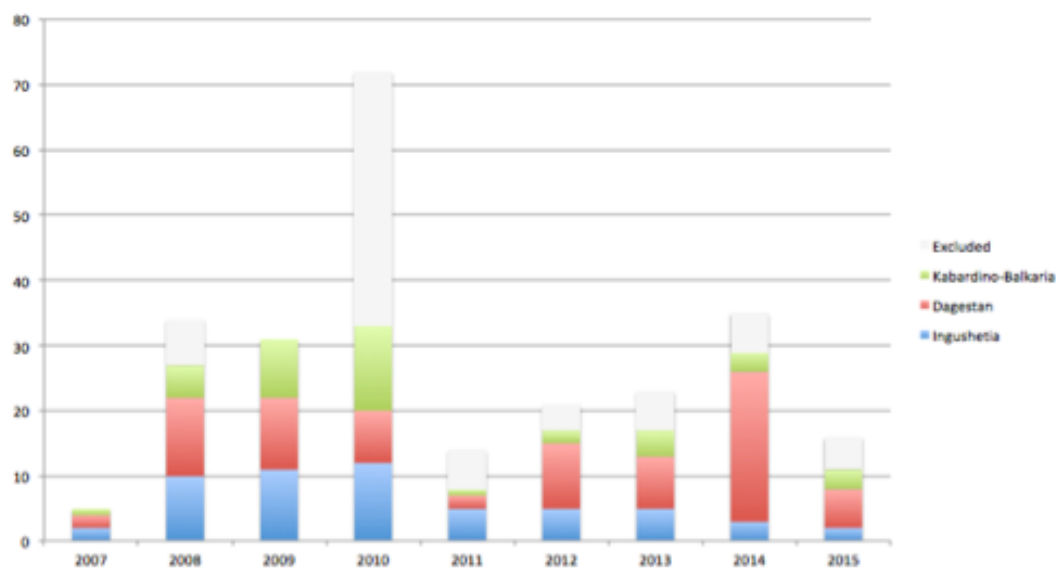


Figure 10. Number of communiqués by republic and year.

These limitations notwithstanding, this is by far the most comprehensive dataset of IK leadership communiqués that I am aware of. Many Western scholars lack the requisite language skills to exploit a corpus of this kind, whereas many Russian scholars are unable to access much of the material due to legal constraints. As such, the study of such material offers considerable potential to contribute to our understanding of the North Caucasus insurgency.

Coding Framing

In order to assess framing, I imported the compiled transcripts into NVivo qualitative analysis software, which is designed to facilitate the management of data and ideas while maintaining the crucial link to the original material and context (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013:2). I coded these communiqués in accordance with a schema adapted from Holbrook (2012), whose research inspired the broad theoretical approach employed here. Holbrook's schema (which can be found in the appendix, along with an abridged version of the schema employed here) drew on the framing literature and was applied to a similar data type: AQ leadership framing. It therefore proved well-suited to analysing IK leadership communiqués, and I have applied a variation of it in my previous published work (Youngman, 2019). It was necessary to adjust the schema slightly, both to focus attention on frames of specific relevance to ideology and because of differences in the topics leaders addressed. As far as diagnostic framing is concerned, I replicated Holbrook's schema exactly, focusing on two broad categories and three specific framing strategies of relevance. These codes capture key components of both diagnostic framing and ideology, namely the articulation of what is wrong with the status quo and what the insurgency is seeking to change.

Socio-cultural and normative issues	
	The undesirability of existing societies <i>References to how features of existing societies, such as man-made laws, democracy, etc., need to be replaced; criticisms of the current system</i>
Grievance narratives	
	Past events <i>References to specific events in the past highlighted as problematic, such as the Stalin-era deportations or the Chechen wars.</i>
	On-going events <i>References to on-going problems or causes of dissatisfaction, such as the mistreatment of Muslims</i>

Figure 11. Diagnostic codes

For prognostic framing, Holbrook's three broad categories were maintained, with only minor modifications being made to the specific codes to account for the different case dynamics. The first category, "Strategic/political vision" captures the extent to which leaders set out clear, long-term goals for the movement. In addition to the original two codes that identify models for emulation and specific policies to be implemented and ultimate visions for society, I added two codes to capture any discussion of previous systems of governance and alternative ideologies of resistance in the North Caucasus. The second category, "Tactics and violence," captured the means of achieving those goals promoted by leaders, in particular focusing on their justification of violent resistance outside of existing political mechanisms. Finally, "Direction/scope of solutions" looked at where such activity was directed, and the friends and enemies that leaders identified as important to achieving their goals. From this category, I dropped two codes relating to regions for expanding operations, in terms of garnering additional support and conducting hostile activity. Whereas these were highly relevant to AQ's global aspirations, these either didn't feature in IK leadership communiqués or were adequately covered by the specification of enemies.

Strategic/political vision	
	Lauded past/existing societies <i>References to past or existing societies that serve as models for emulation, or to their absence.</i>
	Desired way forward and end result <i>Specific policies that should be implemented in society, such as prohibiting the sale of alcohol, closing gambling halls. References to a desired end state, e.g. an independent state governed by their version of Shari'ah law, or to general goals.</i>
	References to ideological systems <i>References to specific widely recognized systems of belief, such as communism or nationalism.</i>
	Debates over the proclamation of the IK <i>Explanations of and references to why the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) was abolished and replaced with the Caucasus Emirate (IK). Efforts to demonstrate the legitimacy of the IK</i>
Tactics and violence	
	Importance of violence <i>References to the importance of insurgent activity and waging "jihad." References to and justification of specific attacks, the use of specific tactics, personal paths to violence.</i>
	Political tools outside violence <i>Advocacy and praise for alternatives to the use of violence and armed resistance, including proving support</i>
	Constraints on the use of violence <i>Explanations for when and why violence should not be used in certain circumstances</i>
	Legitimacy of targeting non-combatants <i>Justifications for carrying out attacks on civilians.</i>
Direction/scope of solutions	
	Declared enemies <i>Designation of other actors as enemies. Identification of actors as targets of action. Specific threats.</i>
	Declared friends/allies <i>References to individuals or groups who are either explicitly identified as friends or allies, or who are praised for their support and policies.</i>

Figure 12. Prognostic codes

It was in considerations of motivational framing where I made my most significant departures from Holbrook's schema. Holbrook (2012) focuses attention on appeals to specific audiences, in particular appeals to and criticisms of Muslim audiences, and develops his discussion of motivational framing around the content of these appeals. This approach is logical, and reflects the fact that it is easier to persuade and mobilize people if you appeal directly to them. However, it was relatively uncommon for North Caucasian

rebel leaders to specify their audiences, and where they did there was sometimes considerable overlap with threats. Methodologically, it was therefore simpler to employ a single code. Moreover, Holbrook's approach to motivational framing is too narrow: it fails to directly capture the role of identity in shaping appeals to action and the manner in which speakers can use examples of exemplary behaviour or promises of rewards to encourage mobilization. Holbrook's subsequent published work (e.g. 2013) captures this by incorporating AQ leaders' efforts to define what it means to be a "true" Muslim and elaboration of rewards for "correct" behaviour into the discussion of motivational appeals. It is, however, important to recognize that, while these themes may be incorporated in direct appeals to audiences, they may also appear independent of them. Finally, the preceding discussion on the literature on motivational framing illustrates that efforts to convince audiences of the practicality of action are important, and this therefore also needs to be captured by the coding schema. To address these issues and explicate some of the themes implicit in Holbrook's original, I developed a number of additional codes. Drawing on the key components of identity, the first category captured efforts to define identity: who 'we' and 'they' are, who falls in between, and what behaviours reinforce or transcend the boundaries between the groups. The second category identified the obligations and rewards offered to audiences. The final category focused on references to support and the difficulties in mobilizing it, and thus how leaders sought to shape perceptions about the practicability of action.

Message direction/audiences	
	Declared audiences <i>Explicitly identified audiences for a communiqué.</i>
Identity	
	Who are 'we' <i>Efforts to define the boundaries of the in-group, who 'we' are, what unites 'us,' and what characteristics 'we' have in common; references to cultural heritage and culturally bound concepts of honor.</i>
	Who are 'they' <i>Efforts to define the boundaries of the out-group, who 'they' are, what unites 'them,' and what characteristics 'they' have in common.</i>
	Who is in the middle <i>Efforts to define the boundaries of a group situated between 'them' and 'us'; portrayals of the group as needing to choose; references to why the group is not part of the 'us.'</i>
	Stories of boundaries between groups <i>References to events and behaviours that reinforce or weaken the boundaries between in-, out- and intermediary groups; references to social relations crossing boundaries.</i>
Obligations and incentives	
	Obligations <i>References to why people are obliged to act; references to fard al-kifaya (a religious duty incumbent on the community of believers) and fard al-ayn (a religious duty incumbent on every Muslim).</i>
	Rewards <i>References to the benefits that will accrue to those who act; eulogization of martyrs and references to the rewards that await them in the afterlife.</i>
Efficacy of action	
	Support and strength <i>References to public support for the insurgency or its absence; references to the relationship between support and the importance of action.</i>
	Trust <i>References to trust or the lack of it and how this affects mobilization and operation within the insurgency.</i>

Figure 13. Motivational codes

Each communiqué was coded initially at the sentence level. In many cases, it was possible to apply more than one code to a sentence, in which case it received all applicable codes. Coding was not intended as a rigid, restrictive framework for converting subjective information into quantifiable categories. Rather, it was intended to aid analysis and enable the grouping of similar themes and meanings.

Reliability

In his discussion of the challenges of verification and proof, Johnston (2002:87) argues that “incorrect or biased coding is probably the greatest source of error” in frame analysis, and the risk of non-replicable results can be mitigated through the adoption of the simplest possible coding strategy or deciding on coding as a group. This coding scheme satisfies both criteria. It is simplistic enough to capture broad themes, without developing numerous granular sub-themes – allowing them to emerge in the analytic process, rather than at the coding stage. Holbrook’s original schema was developed in collaboration with an independent coder, and its applicability across cases testifies to its validity. The adjustments made across diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing are arguably not significant enough to undermine that validity, and I also shared my full coding schema and a sample dataset with another PhD candidate to further test validity and clarify certain codes. The use of NVivo also encourages — indeed, is specifically designed to promote — rigour and consistency (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013:3), for example by allowing for targeted searches and cross-referencing of particular terms.

At the same time, Johnston’s concerns and mitigation strategies relate explicitly to quantitative approaches to text analysis. While they can provide useful guidance to qualitative approaches, it is important to bear in mind the interpretivist approach informing this research. If a commonality of interpretive approaches is that meaning depends on a particular point of view or perspective (Hollstein, 2011:405), then that understanding should apply as much to the researcher as to the intended audience of a communiqué. The interpretation of framing is an unavoidably subjective exercise: individuals can read the same text in different ways, influenced by their prior knowledge, experience, and expectations. Coding provides no more than a guide to how I, as the researcher, am reading

the text and the basic ideas that I am bringing to that reading. Another researcher should be able to see how I have reached my conclusions, but results are never going to be completely replicable, any more than they would be in the conduct of field research or other interpretive approaches – that is, to the extent that they can fully replicate my positionality as a researcher. Thus, I would argue that the presentation of percentages of intercoder reliability or the quantification of findings – in addition to risking mutating frames and meanings (Johnston, 2002:87) – represents no more than a sop to an often dominant positivist paradigm, one that itself displays little awareness of its own limitations. Validity comes more from the iterative nature of the exercise: Statements were read in full multiple times, in order to identify and code relevant frames on a category-by category (e.g. diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational) basis, check that all themes were adequately captured by the coding schema, and discover alternative manifestations of the same theme that may have been missed in an earlier reading. Bazeley and Jackson (2013:3) note that qualitative analysis software may allow one “to work more methodically, more thoroughly, more attentively,” but it does not remove the onus on the researcher to be rigorous in their interpretation and generation of ideas. The same logic holds true for framing analysis in general.

Mapping Political Opportunities

As the preceding chapter noted, scholars frequently deploy the concept of political opportunities with little indication of how they are measuring it. A key exception to this is the work of della Porta (1996, 2006). Comparing movements in Italy and Germany across several decades, she measures political opportunities through a single variable: the policing of protests. She justifies her decision on three grounds: it is easier to understand the

interaction between a single variable and the movement; policing of protest is derivative of legal and institutional changes and therefore may act as a manifestation of them; and policing has a more direct impact on social movements than abstract and distant variables, such as the electoral system. Della Porta (1996:63-64) argues that protest policing “should be very sensitive to the relevant opportunities and constraints, and therefore represent a general expression of the state’s degree of openness or receptivity.”

The logic of this measure, and the rigour and transparency that it offers, is compelling. This remains true even if one moves beyond supposedly measurable ‘facts,’ as opportunities are treated by della Porta, into the realm of actor perceptions – since the experiences of direct engagement with the state are likely to significantly shape the interpretations of movement actors. Its direct applicability to the Russian context, however, is open to question. Collective action is something of a rarity in modern Russia (Henry, 2012:243). Evans (2012:233-234) identifies several reasons for this: a deep distrust of the public sphere; the high levels of commitment required given the potential for conflict and repercussions; and a general apathy and disinterest. Legislative changes in Vladimir Putin’s first two terms as president have only served to make legal protest much more difficult (Chebankova, 2009). Consequently, protests may not take place for a range of reasons extending beyond repression, and constraints on political opportunities may be as likely to result in the absence of, rather than the emergence of or increase in, protests. These issues are only likely to be magnified in the conflict environment of the North Caucasus. Yet protests that, for whatever reason, do not take place cannot be policed, thereby depriving us of our potential measure.

I therefore adopt the broad logic of della Porta’s approach, but not the specific variable. Instead, I focus on interactions between the state and the human rights

community. A number of considerations influenced this choice. Human rights actors are change-oriented: They seek to affect the behaviour of the state, typically through the introduction and/or implementation of legislation. Because their activities are directed towards the state, they function as a point of appeal for people seeking to redress grievances where other mechanisms have failed. How they are treated by the state can serve as a bellwether of broader state attitudes and the possibility of achieving goals through legal means. Indeed, I would contend that states often intentionally signalling changes in attitudes through their engagement with human rights communities. This is particularly important when, as here, considering political opportunities from an interpretivist perspective, where it is the perceptions of such opportunities, rather than any concrete ability to affect change, that is significant. Equally importantly, any measure needs to be applicable across the three republics and the entire period of study, and to be assessable from outside the region. However, since Putin's ascension to the presidency, there has been a significant decline in media freedoms (Chebankova, 2009:398-399), and consequently of available information. This is directly linked to the insurgency: Controlling media coverage was a "central pillar in the Russian war-fighting strategy" during the Second Chechen War (Moore, 2007:319). Negative trends have only increased in Putin's third term. The local media scene is — to put it mildly — also far from vibrant, and reliable and temporally consistent archives are exceptionally difficult to find.⁷ Reliable data on important variables such as the number of security service personnel operating in the region, which would arguably provide a measure of the state's repressive capacity, is not available. My ability to compensate for these shortcomings through on-the-ground data collection was constrained

⁷ All of the local media archives I was able to source either did not cover the entire period or had lengthy gaps in coverage. The situation was further exacerbated by the University failing to provide promised support relating to the acquisition of material.

by fieldwork issues (see appendix). Furthermore, it is worth noting that we are trying to assess changes in something that is characterized first and foremost by absence: At no point in the presidencies of Putin (2000-2008, 2012-date) or Dmitriy Medvedev (2008-2012) was there the slightest prospect of dialogue — much less a formal political, disarmament, or peace process — with the leadership of the insurgency. As such, there is little to be gained by considering the political opportunities available to those already in the insurgency, who might wish to access the political system predominantly *as insurgent actors* (e.g. through a formal peace process). These simply did not exist in the given time period, and changes in this regard only become relevant when considering the insurgency across the entire post-Soviet period.

The cumulative effect of these circumstances was to rule out many variables for assessing political opportunities that would be hypothetically preferable. Human rights actors are one of the few to have maintained a continual presence in the region, and to be relatively transparent about their activities and the constraints they face. It may be objected that the treatment of human rights actors is not necessarily reflective of the opportunities available to all civil society actors (Bindman, 2015:). However, we are not concerned here with political opportunities writ large, but those that are specific to the insurgency. More importantly, given the insurgency's aforementioned lack of access to the political system as a collective actor, we are concerned with perceptions of opportunities by its actual and potential supporters, as well as those who would seek to disengage from the insurgency and reengage with legal political processes as individuals. From this perspective, the fact that in Russia the relationship between the state and human rights organizations is “largely antagonistic” (Bindman, 2015:342-343) is actually advantageous. Indeed, there is a clear parallel between Russian official attitudes to human rights actors and the insurgency, in that

both are frequently portrayed as foreign imports and channels for foreign influence, albeit from different directions. This is not to suggest an ideological equivalence, but to propose that the treatment of human rights actors can serve as a barometer of state tolerance for ideas perceived as “other,” and of the ability of non-state groups with antagonistic relations with the authorities to operate. As such, it has the potential to impact perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of non-violent versus violent conflict with the state, thus affecting the context in which the insurgency seeks to mobilize support.

Coding Political Opportunities

In order to assess this variable, I used key term searches to identify material of interest in local and national media; statements and reports produced by human rights actors; and supplementary material of a non-systematic nature. Identifying actors as members of the human rights community relied on source- or self-identification, since many are not full-time human rights activists, but rather simultaneously perform other roles. Appointees of the state, however, were excluded, since Russia and the local authorities have made extensive strategic use of the words ‘human rights’ in official titles in order to appropriate the human rights discourse (Gilligan, 2010:14-15). Identified material was coded by year and as positive, negative or neutral/ambiguous, and then descriptively recorded. The volume of material did not require a more granular coding schema.

Further information came from a limited number of semi-structured field interviews. Interviews aim to “gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to the meaning of the described phenomenon” (Kvale, 1983:174). In their semi-structured form, they allow the interviewer to enquire in-depth about first-hand perceptions and experiences through the use of key questions, probes and follow-ups, achieving both

richness and depth while maintaining the flexibility to explore points of interest (Rubin and Rubin, 2009:13). They are, thus, tailored to both the individual and the situation (Kvale, 1996). Given that political opportunities are not objective facts, but rooted in subjective interpretations, semi-structured interviews provide a mechanism for understanding how opportunities are perceived by actors on the ground and for enriching and triangulating information available from other sources.

This information was supplemented by one additional variable: a search of the same sources for incidents around mosques involving representatives of the state and more than one non-state actor. The intention was to capture repressive measures towards Salafi communities. This information was treated as supplementary because of difficulties of definition, information availability, and geographic inconsistency. Nevertheless, the treatment of Salafis can serve as an important indicator of state attitudes towards religious believers outside the control of the state, which in turn can influence beliefs about the possibility of freely practising one's faith — a factor of direct relevance to the ideology and mobilization potential of the insurgency. Incidents around mosques, much like della Porta's protest policing, can clearly reflect the state's repression capacity and intent, and thus warrant consideration.

Assessing Mobilizing Structures

The final aspect of PPT that requires assessment is mobilizing structures, and it is here that the application of SMT to clandestine actors, particularly in the North Caucasus, encounters significant difficulties. Open source information on the membership, organizational structure, resources, and tactics available to such actors is extremely patchy

and difficult to triangulate.⁸ Further information difficulties stem from the lack of a strong institutional research presence or culture of data sharing. Statistical data on violence covering the entire period is not readily available, and such data as does exist is often inconsistent, textual and/or insufficiently granular to allow for complex analysis. Various researchers have compiled their own datasets (e.g. O’Loughlin and Witmer, 2011; Toft and Zhukov, 2014; Zhirukhina, 2017), but these are not publicly available and methodologies are sometimes insufficiently transparent to be replicable.⁹ Manually constructing a multi-year, multi-source, and highly detailed incident database that would offer a meaningful contribution to discussions of ideology is a matter of many, many months of intensive work, and automated database construction introduces its own problems in terms of reliability. As such, collecting data that is sufficiently rigorous to assess organizational structures, resources, and tactics is — when placed alongside the other data requirements of the project — beyond this study’s capacity. One of the primary methods for compensating for a lack of existing information in the study of social movements in general and mobilizing structures in particular — embedding oneself in a movement to observe and engage with participants — is not possible, for ethical and legal reasons. In considering mobilizing structures, therefore, the starting point for analysis needs to be recognition of the limitations of open-source information.

Such issues are clearly important when we turn to consider the insurgency’s networks.

If Social Network Analysis provides a mechanism for mapping relationships, we still need

⁸ In the construction of incident databases, many efforts to ‘triangulate’ through consulting multiple media sources overlook the problem that, in a country like modern Russia, many media sources are themselves drawing on the same source of information (i.e. that provided by the state). Where media outlets are replicating information, and sometimes even errors, drawn from the same source, “triangulation” through comparison is meaningless.

⁹ Noting the failure to share data should not be read as in and of itself a criticism of these researchers. There are few incentives (and distinct disincentives) for academics to engage in such data sharing.

to determine which relationships should be mapped and acquire rich information on the nature of those relationships. The initial approach adopted here, in light of the impossibility of mapping all such relationships, was to adopt an ego-centric approach (Hanneman and Riddle, 2011; Kadushin, 2012), with the identified leaders acting as primary ‘egos’ around which a two-step network could be mapped (i.e. the leaders, their connections, and those connections’ connections). Through this, the intention was to examine how the personal networks around leaders impacted framing strategies. Ultimately, however, I decided to abandon this approach. Much of the information on relationships was exceptionally sparse, with few details on their nature or duration. In many cases, the relationships, like membership itself, were often only revealed upon their termination. Moreover, I remained unconvinced that the resulting network maps accurately reflected the networks themselves. Analysis of the networks would likely have convinced a lay or even moderately informed reader; however, I never achieved a level of confidence in the underlying data that I felt would convince those Russian researchers with rich and granular knowledge of the networks. Consequently, I myself remained unconvinced.¹⁰

“Intellectual Worlds” as Networks

Given these data shortcomings, I therefore abandoned the ego-centric approach, although information on the principle egos has contributed to considerations of leadership. I instead decided to concentrate on the “intellectual world” of the insurgency, using the

¹⁰ The multiple shortcomings of information availability could be used to argue against consideration of the case. Yet if we build our theories exclusively on cases where rich data is available, we overlook the issue that there may be fundamental differences between more- and less-accessible insurgencies that affect the applicability of theories drawn from the study of the former to the latter. In other words, the poverty of data may be a consequence of movement and environment characteristics. After all, many of the problems affecting our ability to study insurgencies in information-poor environments also impact their ability to operate and recruit.

individuals referenced in the communiqués themselves to sketch these as networks. This approach was inspired by the work of Mische (2003) and, in particular, Edwards (2014) — who herself draws on Mische’s work. Mische (2003:258) argues that networks are “*composed of* culturally constituted processes of communicative interaction,” in which cultural forms like identities and frames are “shaped, deployed, and reformulated in conversation.” Edwards (2014:65), meanwhile, treats “personal social networks as socio-cultural ‘lifeworlds’ with a particular ‘meaning structure’ that arises in communicative interaction.” Like both authors, I am interested in the communicative dimension of networks and how they shape subjective meanings. However, rather than focusing on communicative interactions as a mechanism for mapping personal networks, I concentrate on the networks contained within the communiqués themselves. In contrast to an ego-centric approach that examines actual relationships, this retains a focus on the interpretive dimensions of communiqués. By referencing people, communicators situate their efforts to shape meaning within a certain context, as well as providing indications of the meanings that are salient to themselves. In other words, the networks created by communicators both reflect the intentions and help shape perceptions of the ego, and therefore the way in which their messages are received. Accordingly, studying them can enhance our understanding of actors in circumstances where other sources are limited.

If we consider this proposition from the perspective of ideology, then its benefits become clearer. Actors’ “intellectual worlds” can provide us with a mechanism for capturing intellectual influences. If all groups cite the same authorities for their ideas, this is clearly relevant to considerations of ideology. Wiktorowicz (2004b), for example, demonstrated how Al-Qaeda’s leaders cited certain popular scholars and intellectuals in order to boost its own religious authority. Yet it may not be adequately reflected in the

problems that they diagnose for their movements or the programme of action they put forward to address them. Much existing work on ideological authority is descriptive in its assessment of relationships: A, B, and C cite X; B and C cite Y; Z is popular in these communities; and so on. The contribution here is to propose a method for systematically mapping these intellectual universes, so that we can compare and assess them in a broader context. Both A and B may cite X, but X may lie at the centre of A's and B's intellectual universes and the periphery of C's. A's intellectual universe may be significantly more diverse than B's, potentially leading to different conclusions about X's contribution to each. Such nuances are hard to capture in a purely descriptive account of who cites who and explorations of the ideologues' ideas.

Coding Mobilizing Structures

In compiling the initial SNA database that has contributed information on the individual leaders, I made recourse to a rich range of hitherto unexploited Russian-language sources. I identified the primary egos from both the communiqués themselves and observations on leadership personnel recorded over the course of almost a decade of monitoring the North Caucasus insurgency. Additional information on those egos, the people they were connected to, the people those people were connected to, and the nature of the relationships was then extracted from references contained in the communiqués themselves; targeted searches on a range of federal and local media outlets; and insurgent media. This was supplemented by court reporting and official statements. Thus I felt confident that the deficiencies in the resulting network were predominantly the result of information availability, rather than source selection. Such information as was collected was nevertheless relevant to considering the leaders, if not specifically the networks around

them.

In identifying the “intellectual worlds” of insurgent leaders, I adopted a two-mode network approach, in which the communiqués functioned as one mode, akin to events, and the people referenced within them acted as another. These references were recorded in a matrix in Excel and coded according to category: insurgent, republican (i.e. Dagestani, Ingushetian, or Kabardino-Balkarian, according to the identity of the speaker), regional (North Caucasian), Russian, global, historical, Qur’anic and scholarly. References were coded as binary (1 for present, 0 for absent). Only the Prophet Muhammad was excluded from the references, since his ubiquity offered little by way of potential for insights. This information was then analysed using UCINET SNA software (version 6.665) and visualized using both default and by-category visualizations to gauge the nature of the networks. My approach focused on rich description and did not draw on any of the mathematical models commonly employed in SNA, mirroring the approach of Edwards (2014:67).

Ethics

Ethical concerns played a key role in shaping this research. First, having experienced varying levels of insurgent violence throughout the post-Soviet period, the North Caucasus represents a conflict or (depending on your reading of current levels of instability) post-conflict society. The implications of this influenced decisions made vis-à-vis fieldwork, which will be addressed in the appendix. More broadly, however, we need to recognize that our research can have implications for a region beset by low levels of trust and violent state practices (Youngman, 2018). Imagine, in analysing the insurgency’s ideology, we were to conclude that the ideology of the insurgency was exclusively Salafi; that Salafis represented

the primary target audience for insurgent media; and that recruits to the insurgency came exclusively from Salafi communities, we would be hard pressed to avoid providing at least partial justification for predatory state practices directed against those Salafi communities. Research into insurgency and political violence can have real-world implications beyond our intentions. At the same time, the solution is not necessarily obvious. If these indeed were to be the genuine conclusions of our work, then we cannot hide them simply because they represent an inconvenient truth. Rather, we need to be clear about the consequences of our findings and recognize the potential uses to which they may be put. In the case of this particular research, however, potential concerns about impact are mitigated by two important factors. First, its focal point is material that is deliberately placed in the public domain, either by the insurgents themselves or other local actors. To a large degree, the inaccessibility of local communities, much less movement members, diminishes the ability to do them harm. Second, developments within the insurgency itself have made this work mostly historical in nature: the IK no longer exists as a distinct movement, and virtually every insurgent actor discussed has already shuffled off this mortal coil.

The reliance on material produced by the insurgency, however, brings with it its own ethical complications. The IK is designated as a “terrorist” organization by both the UK and the Russian governments, and this has implications for the conduct of research. The environment in the UK is somewhat hostile for such research, and there is considerable legal ambiguity over what is permissible. The British Library, for example, in 2015 declined to host an archive of Taliban primary source material, in part because of legal advice suggesting it might violate the 2006 Terrorism Act (British Library, 2015). In order to avoid complications arising from research into such a sensitive subject, and in line with the University Code of Practice, a number of steps were stipulated in our submission to the

University ethics committee. Firstly, the Head of School, University Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer, and Head of IT Services were all informed of the nature of the research. Secondly, additional ethical guidance was sought from the UK's Centre for Research and Evidence for Security Threats (CREST), a cross-university consortium funded by the UK security agencies, for which one of the supervisory team was a programme lead. Finally, additional data security measures were put in place, and sensitive material was not accessed in public computing spaces. These steps were deemed satisfactory to the ethics committee, which approved the research, and most of the concerns that were raised related to the safe conduct of field research.

Conclusion

Having made the case for the need to better understand the role of ideology in political violence in chapter one, and proposed SMT as a means of doing so in chapter two, this chapter has proposed the contemporary North Caucasus insurgency as offering a set of cases to which SMT can be applied. The first part of the chapter introduced the case in general, tracing its origins to the Chechen wars of 1994-1996 and 1999-2002 and the ensuing regionalization and Islamization of the conflict. The second part examined scholarly understandings of ideology in relation to the conflict, demonstrating that its treatment has been characterized first and foremost by neglect and misunderstanding. The third section then proceeded to develop a methodology for applying SMT to the contemporary insurgency. It offered a detailed explanation for the boundaries of the study and the sources to be consulted, and the challenges that a difficult-to-access insurgency such as the IK poses to the study of social movements and ideology. It also outlined the ethical issues that arise in such circumstances, demonstrating that this study is rigorous and

systematic in its approach.

The next task that faces us is to move from the theoretical and the abstract to a detailed descriptive analysis of the individual cases. In using the term description, I am aligning myself with Gerring's (2012) rejection of description as a mundane task of little scientific value and prefatory to causal analysis. Rather, rich description is necessary for generating fresh ideas and hypotheses (Gerring, 2017), and requires complex interpretation to understand its meaning and significance. Indeed, the preceding discussion clearly validates Gerring's (2012) claim that descriptive analysis is a far from simple task, particularly when applied to clandestine actors operating in non-democratic settings. With this in mind, the following three chapters will undertake a detailed exploration of ideology in the cases of Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia, examining framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities across time in an effort to understand the role of ideology in each.

Part Two: Mapping the Ideology of the Caucasus Emirate

Chapter Four

Dagestan

Introduction

Dagestan has played a prominent role in the history of the North Caucasus insurgency. As is true of individuals from across the region, Dagestanis fought in the First Chechen War, and the Chechen rebel invasion of Dagestan triggered the second war. From 2010 to the end of the period of study, Dagestan became the focal point of regional insurgent violence (Memorial, 2016a).¹¹ Dagestanis played an important role in the ideological evolution from the ChRI to the IK (Campana and Ratelle, 2014; Youngman, 2019). Further evidence of a growing ideological influence came with the transfer of Shari'ah authority within the movement to the republic in early 2010. Finally, with Umarov's death in late 2013, overall leadership of the IK eventually transferred to Dagestan. As such, it becomes particularly important to understand the ideology that Dagestani rebel leaders articulated.

Moreover, we can expect to see significant differences between Dagestani and Chechen ideologies. Dagestan mostly did not experience the same historical grievances as Chechnya, such as the Stalin-era deportations, nor did it experience the extensive destruction of political and social fabric wrought by Chechnya's two wars. We would expect such differences to be reflected in diagnostic framing. Equally importantly, the

¹¹ It accounted for more than half of all security service casualties in all but one year, 2014, when Chechnya briefly overtook it, largely as a result of two attacks on Grozny (Memorial, 2016a).

social composition of Dagestan is fundamentally different from Chechnya, particularly with regards to ethnic diversity. Whereas post-wars Chechnya is largely monoethnic, Dagestan has at least fourteen major ethnic groups, and this ethnic diversity has played a significant role in the political life of the republic (Ware and Kisriev, 2010). Thus, again, we might anticipate differences in motivational framing and efforts to shape identity.

In order to examine the ideology of the Dagestani branch of the insurgency and how it interacted with local circumstances, this chapter is structured as follows. The first section will examine the historical roots of the insurgency in the republic. The second through to the fourth sections will investigate the various aspects of political process theory looking in turn at framing across its three dimensions, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities. Each of these sections will be internally divided according to the temporal logic laid out in chapter three. The final section of the chapter will then offer some preliminary conclusions about the nature of the Dagestani insurgency's ideology and how it related to both internal and external dynamics.

The Evolution of Conflict in Dagestan

The post-Soviet religious revival manifested itself particularly strongly in Dagestan, where Islam had its oldest historical roots (Bobrovnikov, 2001:5). The growing popularity of Islam made it an attractive tool for political actors of all stripes, who sought to exploit religion's mobilizing and legitimizing potential (Bram and Gammer, 2013). The authorities sought to establish control over religion, in particular through a monopoly over the Spiritual Boards and drawing Sufi leaders into political alliances (Bram and Gammer, 2013). The myriad ethno-nationalist movements similarly sought to incorporate Islamic rhetoric and symbology into their programmes (Yemelianova, 2003b:110), and nationalist and religious

competition often worked hand-in-hand. This was, moreover, a broad spectrum revival, leading not only to a resurgence of supposedly more ‘traditional’ Sufi forms of religious practice, but also a growth in support for more puritanical Salafi ideas. The first such Salafi groups, led by Akhmad-qadi Akhtayev and the brothers Bagaudin Magomedov and Abbas Kebedov, emerged already in the late Soviet period (Khanbabaev, 2010:95-96). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, these hitherto suppressed groups were able to compete in the public sphere for support. In the context of socio-economic collapse and government ineffectiveness and corruption (Yemelianova, 2010c:129-130), as well as “the failure of ethno-nationalists to generate a viable opposition” (Yemelianova, 2003b), their ideas of egalitarianism and social justice found fertile soil (Sagramoso and Yarlykapov, 2013:55-56). Salafi communities arose across the republic, and Salafism became a key channel both of resistance and efforts at social realization (Gammer, 2005; Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2012).

The majority of Salafi communities initially advanced a peaceful agenda (Sagramoso, 2012:562). However, they found themselves drawn into increasingly conflictual relations with the authorities, and events in Dagestan were heavily influenced by developments in neighbouring Chechnya. The authorities passed a law banning ‘Wahhabism’ in the republic, without actually defining the term (Babich, 2008). Moreover, distinct strands of Salafism were themselves in competition. One, represented by Akhtayev, sought peaceful accommodation with the Russian political space (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2012:258). The other, led by Magomed, focused on resistance, calling for the establishment of an Islamic state in the Caucasus and supporting jihad in Chechnya but not – at least rhetorically – its extension into Dagestan (Sagramoso, 2012:562; Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2012:258). The Magomedovian strand enjoyed strong links with the Chechen rebel networks of Shamil

Basayev and Emir Khattab, as well as with Middle Eastern Islamist groups, and this bolstered their position (Gammer, 2005; Moore, 2010; Ware, 2013b). Salafi groups established various social and political organisations, and returnees from the First Chechen War played a prominent role in the establishment of one of the most notable and consequential communities, centred around three villages that became known as the Kadar Zone (Gammer, 2005). This community sought to implement Shari'ah governance, enforced by militias, and similar communities established themselves elsewhere. In September 1998, in an effort to manage the escalating conflict, Russian Interior Minister Sergey Stepashin travelled to Dagestan and personally negotiated a treaty between the Dagestani government and the Kadar Zone (Gammer, 2005). At the same time, Akhtayev's death in 1998 and efforts to drive Salafism from the political arena,

contributed to the suppression of an intellectually inclined and politically motivated leadership and [...led to] the emergence of a new generation of Salafi leaders who see violence as the only justifiable means of pursuing the Islamist cause (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2012:260).

With the outbreak of the Second Chechen War, the uneasy truce with the Kadar Zone collapsed, and Dagestani volunteer groups and federal forces repelled the invasion and reclaimed the Kadar Zone (Gammer, 2005).

Chechen-centric readings of the North Caucasus insurgency's evolution that view the expansion of conflict into Dagestan simply as an overspill of the Chechen wars, directed by Chechen rebel leaders (see, for example, Pokalova, 2015) are problematic for ignoring these distinct conflict dynamics already at work in the republic. In addition to the activities of the Dagestani actors who were involved in the first war, Akhtayev, Magomedov and Kebedov formed part of a region-wide Salafi network (Moore and Tumelty, 2009:83). The decision to invade Dagestan in 1999 that triggered the Second Chechen War was ostensibly

made to support these Salafi communities, and Magomedov in particular (Akhmadov with Lansky, 2010:152-153). The destruction of the Kadar Zone, in turn, led to some of the *jama'at*'s¹² members travelling to Chechnya, and others creating Jama'at Shari'at — a group that would form the core of the Dagestani insurgency (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2012:262-263). Thus, Dagestani actors were both continually involved in shaping the composition and preferences of the Chechen insurgency, and had their own agenda and agency (Campana and Ratelle, 2014). The years 2003-2005 witnessed a surge of attacks on law enforcement personnel (Kurbanov, 2010) and Jama'at Shari'at's leaders gradually consolidated their control of armed groups in the republic, bringing them first under the banner of the Caucasus Front and then that of the IK.

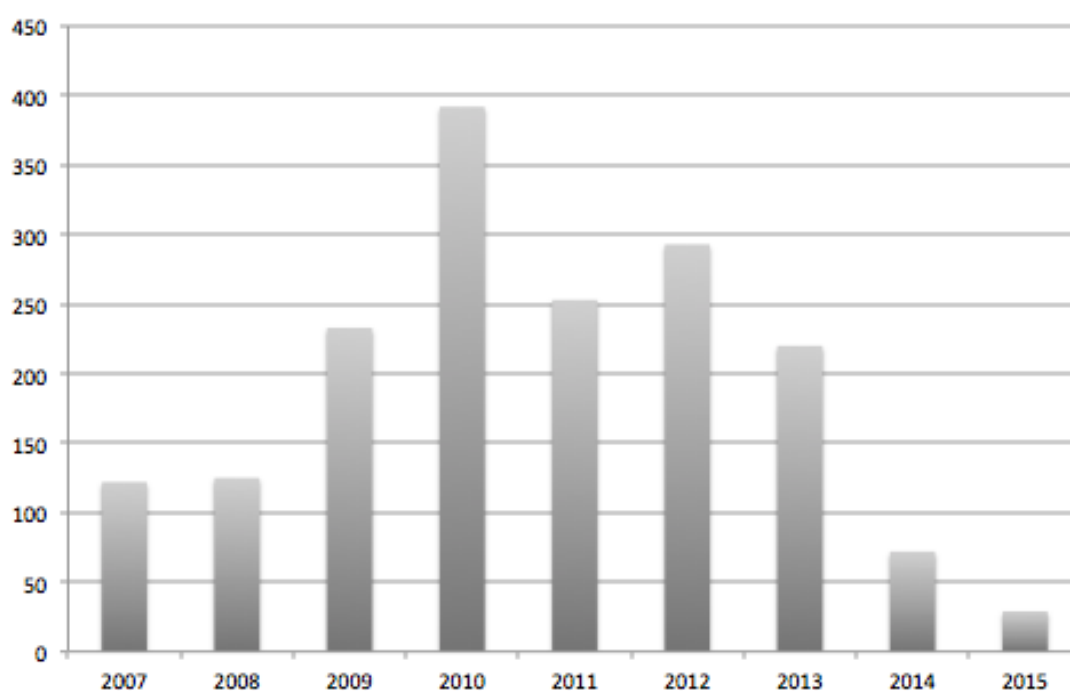


Figure 14. Security service losses in Dagestan by year (Memorial, 2016a).

¹² The word *jama'at* has multiple meanings. At its simplest, it refers to a political entity comprising a village or group of historically connected villages and their surrounding areas (Ware, 2013b:300). When used in relation to the insurgency — and therefore applicable to most references in this dissertation — it means an armed insurgent group.

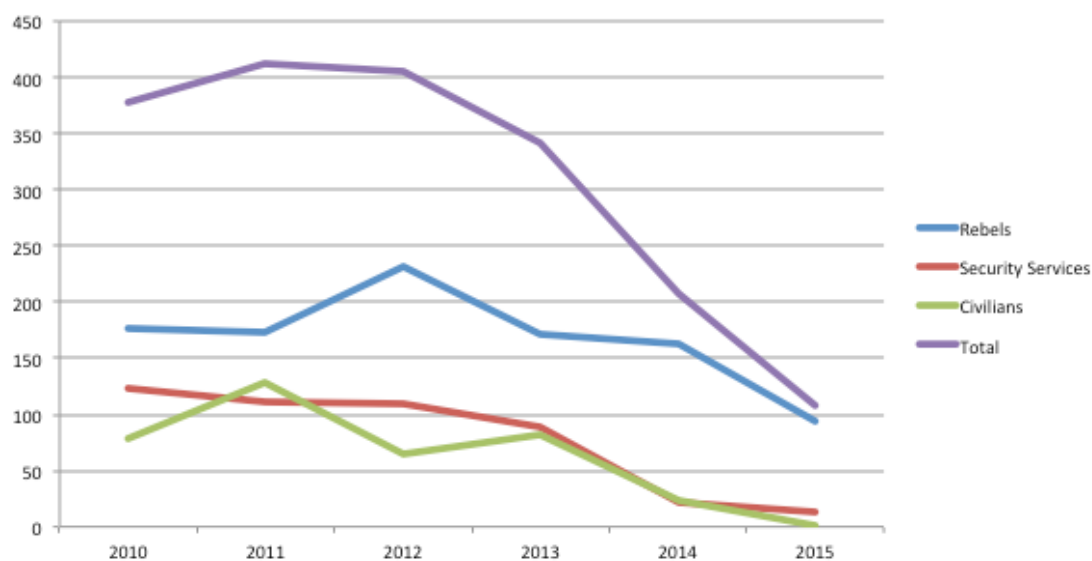


Figure 15. Numbers killed in Dagestan by actor category, 2010-2014 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011c, 2012b, 2013a, 2014c, 2015c, 2016c). Kavkazskiy Uzel only started publishing detailed statistics from 2010 onwards, and therefore earlier years are unavailable.

Framing

Phase One

Focusing on Symptoms, not Structures

The religious conflict that provided the context for the emergence of the Dagestani insurgency found its reflection in the diagnosis offered by its leadership in the early years of the IK. This diagnosis – offered mainly by Jama’at Shari’at, due to a high turnover of leaders and a limited number of statements attributable to identifiable individuals – focused on a grievance narrative that portrayed the Dagestani authorities as waging a war against Islam and mistreating Muslims. Jama’at Shari’at claimed that “a battle with Islam is underway, the blood of Muslims is running, and the tears of Muslim women are flowing” (Kavkazcenter, 2007d). In doing so, Jama’at Shari’at sought to depict the situation as one in which it was impossible for Muslims to live according to their faith. This message was

reinforced by claims that Muslim women were being denied access to education for wearing the hijab (Kavkazcenter, 2008p), and that the authorities were routinely torturing and killing Muslim men (Kavkazcenter, 2007d, 2008n, 2009p, 2010l). Broad accusations were supported by reference to specific instances of mistreatment.

Less prominent, but nevertheless supporting this identity-based diagnosis, were portrayals of Russia as the source of these problems. Thus, Jama'at Shari'at claimed that Russia had occupied the republic, and brought with it the problematic social practices that were supposedly blighting life in Dagestan (Saadullayev, 2008; Kavkazcenter, 2007d, 2009n). One diatribe in particular encapsulated their attitude:

They themselves gave birth to all of these problems of a social, economic and moral nature, as they say. They are the ones who stole, robbed, killed, contaminated all around with their vices. They are the ones who own the sauna-bordels, casinos, restaurants and supermarkets with alcohol; they are the ones who keep as servants the police gangs and other security services; they are the ones who use and spread drugs with impunity (Kavkazcenter, 2010m).

The insurgency offered a sweeping diagnosis of social problems that extended beyond police brutality and located the security services within a broader system of social ills, at the centre of which lay Russia. Notably absent from this critique, however, was any detailed discussion of underlying structural and systemic problems. Jama'at Shari'at's was, at best, a mid-range critique that focused on manifestations, on particular practices and behaviours. It treated root causes as self-evident, stemming from the nature of both Russia and the Dagestani authorities. Consequently, it failed to address the question of why it would be insufficient to deal with the symptoms – the availability of drugs and alcohol, police impunity and so forth – and instead required wholesale system change. In the early years, we find no sophisticated theoretical explanation of the compatibility of Islam and

democracy, nor debates about the merits and flaws of different systems of governance.

Only from 2009 onwards, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, do we see a broader perspective starting to emerge. Jama'at Shari'at derided official statements about economic growth as "brazen lies," claiming instead that growing unemployment and increasing prices would lead to a general decline in living standards and an increase in property crimes (Kavkazcenter, 2009n). Another statement claimed that "we live in an unjust society" and again forecast a growth in "crime and anarchy," portraying Russia as a country on the brink of collapse (Kavkazcenter, 2009r). The group implied that the economic costs of the crisis would be uneven, affecting Dagestani Muslims most of all, and drew on memories of the country's economic crisis a decade previously. Yet, even here, it is a critique that remained rooted in the immediate political and economic situation. It failed to address the question of why the underlying system itself was irredeemable.

A Bloody Path to an Uncertain Destination

If Jama'at Shari'at's diagnosis was somewhat shallow, it nevertheless displayed oceanic depths compared to the solutions that it offered. Certainly, we can identify a clear and consistent goal: the establishment of a Shari'ah-governed polity. The group's very name pointed to the centrality of that goal to its proclaimed *raison d'être*. Time and again, the leadership insisted that the insurgency was united in fighting for Shari'ah. This focus is unsurprising, given its importance to jihadist ideology – indeed, it is as underwhelming a discovery as learning that communists are fighting to establish communism. Where our expectations are confounded, however, is in the search of explanations of how they understood this goal. There is no single interpretation of Shari'ah, which covers the whole

gamut of social and economic activities and relations (Kerimov, 2012).¹³ In other words, there is plenty to debate. Yet the rebel leadership declined to engage in any meaningful discussion of how it understood the term. What Shari'ah law meant in practice was left almost wholly undefined, even in the statements of those with theological training. Jama'at Shari'at offered nothing that could be defined as a political programme of action, even in rudimentary terms. It spoke of fighting “until the black flag with *la ilaha illa'llah* [the *shahada*, or Islamic profession of faith] is raised above the *gossovet* [parliament building]” (Kavkazcenter, 2009l). What would happen inside the building, however, remained a mystery.

We can also see how the trope of Shari'ah governance enjoyed an ambiguous status. At times, it was evoked as a destination: The insurgency was fighting to establish an Islamic state, ruled by Shari'ah (Kavkazcenter, 2007c, 2008q, 2009r). Just as frequently, the state was characterized as already existing, in the form of the IK, and the goal was to drive the infidels from its territory and consequently ensure the supremacy of Shari'ah (Kavkazcenter, 2008m, 2008o). Consequently, a Shari'ah-governed polity existed somewhere between a *fait accompli* and a future goal. This ambiguity was neither accidental, nor always something the leaders themselves were unaware of. Qadi Abdulla Saadullayev (Abu Yakhya Davud), for example, explained the inconsistency through the diagnosis of occupation, asserting that the IK,

does not have all the components of a so-called ‘fully-fledged state’ in the contemporary understanding; however, at the given stage of the war with the infidels, it is what was possible to do in conditions of a cruel war and the

¹³ Shari'ah is the sum of duties, obligations and guidelines established by the Qur'an and the Sunna – the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. There is nothing inherently extremist in calls to live according to Shari'ah – a mistake often made by non-Muslim analysts who cite such calls as *prima facie* evidence of extremism.

occupation of Islamic lands (Saadullayev, 2008).

Such positioning, to a degree, sought to entwine the movement's goals in its very identity, by establishing the IK as both the desired destination and the means of getting there.

As with its diagnosis, however, we can see that Jama'at Shari'at's principle focus was on the immediate, namely, on justifying the violence that it was engaged in. It performed this function by claiming that violence offered "the only way to freely preach Islam" (Kavkazcenter, 2008h), and "the sole correct path to defend the honour and dignity of Muslims and establish Shari'ah (Kavkazcenter, 2009r). In directing this violence, Jama'at Shari'at focused attention on the actors deemed responsible for perpetrating the grievances that it had diagnosed. In practice, this meant directing violence against Dagestani actors, in particular those who worked for the security services as either employees or informants (Kavkazcenter, 2007c, 2008q, 2009j, 2009n, 2009p, 2010k; Malachiyev, 2008). Other targets included those implicated in the problematic social practices Jama'at Shari'at had identified: local religious officials (Kavkazcenter, 2008q); the directors of various institutions accused of preventing women from wearing the hijab (Kavkazcenter, 2008p); and those who sold drugs or alcohol or engaged in pagan practices like witchcraft and fortune telling (Kavkazcenter, 2009m). These were all what might be considered immediate enemies – those operating on the ground, in the same space as that which the insurgency sought to control. Notably absent from the leadership's list of targets were any external actors. Russian actors were not necessarily excluded; indeed, the leadership was quite specific that it saw Russia as the source of problems and did not draw a distinction between local and federal security services (Kavkazcenter, 2008q). Nevertheless, by virtue of Dagestani actors being more directly engaged in many of the diagnosed problems, they assumed a far more prominent place in efforts to justify and direct violence. Such rhetoric

contrasts with that of Umarov, who placed Russia at the centre of his analysis and relegated local actors to a secondary, supporting role (Youngman, 2019).

Perhaps the most notable feature of Jama'at Shari'at's prognostic framing was that violence may have been supposedly born of necessity, but it was certainly not engaged in reluctantly. Rather, the group's statements appear to revel in its gratuitous and retributory nature. Multiple statements spoke of giving a "worthy answer" to the suffering of Dagestani Muslims or portrayed specific attacks as a direct response to persecution (Kavkazcenter, 2007c, 2007d, 2008h). Jama'at Shari'at threatened that "the enemies of Allah will choke with bloody tears, inshallah [God willing]" (Kavkazcenter, 2007c) and promised that the earth will burn under the feet of the security services (Kavkazcenter, 2008k, 2009k). Numerous statements appeared to rejoice in the suffering of victims, recounting the pain inflicted on targets and expressing the hope that "Allah will tear off the legs of all of Islam's enemies who have stepped on the lands of Muslims" (Kavkazcenter, 2008j). Nor did Jama'at Shari'at display a deep concern with civilian casualties. It insisted that "we are not fighting civilians, much less Muslims" (Kavkazcenter, 2007c) and claimed that its operations tried to avoid civilian casualties (Kavkazcenter, 2008m), but managing perceptions over the non-intentional victims of its activity was not central to its messaging. It accused the security services of hiding behind civilians, but offered no apology, instead placing the onus on civilians themselves to avoid areas where insurgents might attack (Kavkazcenter, 2008m). Indeed, it paid as much attention to explaining how partisan tactics enabled the insurgency itself to avoid losses (Kavkazcenter, 2008m). Jama'at Shari'at's was a total war, divorced from concerns of restraint and innocent victims.

Manichean Visions

Both diagnostic and prognostic framing pointed towards, and drew upon, the main motivational strategy employed by Dagestani insurgent leaders: identity framing. Jihadism, like many revolutionary ideologies, is inherently Manichean, depicting a stark divide between the virtuous warrior on Allah's path and his evil opponent, in service to the devil (Brachman, 2009; Holbrook, 2014). The notion of the authorities being at war with Islam translated into a war on Muslims, placing people's Islamic identity under threat. The imagery of both the tears and blood of Muslims flowing, meanwhile, was clearly intended to inspire an emotional response, outrage, in the audience. After all, how can you claim to be Muslim and stand by while these injustices are being perpetrated against your fellow believers? Insurgent leaders also sought to activate identity boundaries more directly. On the one hand, Jama'at Shari'at spoke of Dagestan as the homeland of Gazi-Mukhammad and Shamil, iconic historical figures of anti-Russian resistance (Kavkazcenter, 2007d). In evoking the names of multiple revolutionary figures, Jama'at Shari'at sought to craft a historical narrative in which religious and Dagestani identity were combined and Dagestan was at the forefront of a religious struggle for emancipation. The insurgency was, self-evidently, to be understood as heirs to this tradition. Having been "born free," Dagestanis should not accept "the wages of slaves" and subordination to the infidel (Kavkazcenter, 2009r).

Another key mobilizing strategy, the concept of religious obligation, required prior acceptance of this identity framing. As such, insurgent leaders did not simply articulate an identity that people should accept; if they accepted it, they were supposed to accept the obligations that came with it. Jama'at Shari'at claimed that a failure to fight the infidel constituted a denial of religion – and consequently a rejection of their identity as Muslims

(Kavkazcenter, 2007c). Saadullayev, meanwhile, extended the obligation beyond the Caucasus to “any Muslim territory that is occupied by the infidels or seized by the murtads” – a common leadership framing strategy underpinning attempts to expand the insurgency’s support base (Youngman, 2019). Saadullayev also extended the obligation beyond fighting, claiming that Muslims were obliged to pay zakat (a mandatory charitable donation that is one of the pillars of Islam) and the insurgents were authorized to collect it (Saadullayev, 2008). Thus identity framing served to encourage broader engagement with the movement and move it beyond a question of persuasion to one of duty.

Concepts of obligation and honour were reinforced through portrayals of those who had been killed as martyrs who had died on Allah’s path and fulfilled their duty, and therefore as worthy of emulation. One Jama’at Shari’at statement, for example, told how a martyr had covered the path of retreating comrades, leaving the infidel “in shock at the unparalleled valour of our brothers and their self-sacrifice on Allah’s path” (Kavkazcenter, 2008j). Those killed invariably died gloriously against a numerically superior enemy (Kavkazcenter, 2008k). Jama’at Shari’at’s statements routinely signed off with “Victory or heaven,” a variant on “death or glory,” and claimed “our dead are in Heaven and yours are in Hell,” hinting at the rewards for those martyred (Kavkazcenter, 2008k, 2008l, 2009l). The eulogies of killed emirs in particular highlighted their decisiveness, bravery and personal sacrifice for the cause (Kavkazcenter, 2010j).

On the other side of this Manichean divide, the insurgency’s opponents were depicted as malevolent, dishonourable, and devoid of redeeming characteristics – the more so the higher one went up the chain of command. Prominent individuals were assigned derogatory nicknames that denied them even a modicum of respectability. Thus, Dagestani President Magomedsalam Magomedov became *Maga-privet*, associating him with a Russian rather

than Islamic salutation (*privet* instead of *salam*) and potentially paganism (*mag*, a sorcerer); Dagestani Interior Minister Adilgerey Magomedtagirov became Khamilgerey (*khamil*, Avar for donkey (Smirnov, 2006)); Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov became Kafyrov, embedding the concept of infidel in his very name. Other representatives of the local authorities, meanwhile, were dismissed as mere “puppets” who had gone over to the side of the infidel (Kavkazcenter, 2009n), and the themes of occupation became intertwined with binary identities: the occupier was an infidel, and the infidel an occupier. In contrast to the bravery of the mujahideen, the security services were allegedly gripped by fear and quitting in droves (Kavkazcenter, 2008q, 2009p, 2009q). The Manichean portrayal of identity afforded no doubt as to which side people should choose, while the total nature of the conflict sought to deny the possibility of declining to make such a choice. Jama’at Shari’at did not recognize either an intermediary position or the possibility of moving between “them” and “us.”

Phase Two

Shifting to the Periphery

At the start of the second phase, we see the persistence of Jama’at Shari’at’s grievance narrative, which accused the authorities of a range of sins and profiting from various social ills (Kavkazcenter, 2010l, 2010m). At the same time, Magomed Vagapov (Seyfullakh Gubdenskiy) ascended to the position of overall leader, becoming the fourth IK emir of Dagestan and simultaneously IK qadi. He issued what were only the fourth and fifth leadership statements attributable to a specific individual. However, he did not offer anything more than a passing diagnosis that claimed that “external enemies have become more decisive in the war against Muslims” (Vagapov, 2010b). Moreover, with his death in

August 2010, Jama'at Shari'at disappeared as a distinct voice within the insurgency. Consequently, we see a sharp decline, not only in diagnostic framing, but also of communication more broadly. Over the remaining 36 months of the phase, only three statements were issued in the name of the general leadership. The only explanation of what the insurgency was fighting against came over two and a half years later, with a brief reference to Russian responsibility "not only for the occupation of the Caucasus, but also for monstrous crimes against Muslims" (VDagestan.com, 2013).

The communicative burden therefore shifted to the vilayyat's emir. However, none of Vagapov's successors – Israfil Validzhanov (Khasan), killed April 2011; Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Salikh), killed February 2012; and Rustam Asilderov (Abu Mukhammad), who defected to IS in December 2014 – articulated a grievance narrative as extensive as Jama'at Shari'at's or added the missing sophisticated structural criticism. Daudov rejected what he described as "*taghut*"¹⁴ laws, which are adopted, annulled, or changed with the arrival of a new pharaoh" (Daudov, 2012). He also accused those who collaborated with the local authorities of "selling their religion for a piece of this world and [being prepared] to destroy Muslims for a bone from the table of these descendants of pigs and monkeys" (Daudov Daudov, 2012). Yet these amounted to a shallow rejection of the existing system and practice and were not well developed. Asilderov, too, did not offer a substantive explanation of what the insurgency was fighting against.¹⁵ He accused the Russian security services of kidnapping and murdering Muslims (Asilderov, 2012b), claimed people were dying of drunkenness and cold, and criticized high levels of expenditure on worldly goods

¹⁴ Meijer (2009:xiv) notes that the term *taghut* has multiple meanings, including idolatry and "an oppressive or unjust ruler who does not rule according to revelation."

¹⁵ Three of Daudov's five statements are missing from the corpus, impacting the conclusions that can be drawn. However, Asilderov issued nine statements in this phase, five of which are considered here.

and social practices such as marriage (Asilderov, 2012c). Nevertheless, he focused predominantly on specific instances and practices and failed to translate this into a substantive political critique. His grievance narrative, moreover, remained relatively peripheral in the context of his overall communicative output, generally offered in passing.

The sole exception to the deterioration in diagnostic framing came from Dagestani Qadi and Mountain Sector emir Magomed Suleymanov (Abu Usman Gimrinskiy). He deployed a more extensive grievance narrative, claiming that Muslims were being degraded and imprisoned (Suleymanov, 2013a) and that each appointed Dagestani leader was more unjust than his predecessors (Suleymanov, 2013b). He also offered the mid-range critique previously articulated by Jama'at Shari'at, rejecting rule by the "infidel" in principle and locating in it the source of undesirable social practices (Suleymanov, 2011, 2013b). Sufi leaders, too, were pinpointed as a target for blame, with Suleymanov claiming that they had ordered the persecution of "Wahhabis" and inspired the republic's "anti-Wahhabi" law (Suleymanov, 2012). As important, however, as the specific framing strategy he employed was its importance relative to the overall communiqués. Many of his criticisms were, after all, far from original and offered few substantive innovations, with perhaps the exception that Suleymanov was more transparently misogynistic than most leaders and consequently placed greater emphasis on supposedly problematic practices involving women. Rather, it was that his diagnoses often constituted one of the key messages of his statements, instead of being peripheral additions.

Relative Moderation

In this phase, we see continuity in Shari'ah being offered as a general but non-specific goal. Vagapov employed a strategy of definition through opposition, claiming that he had

advocated for the proclamation of the IK because people “were not fighting for Ichkeria, for presidents, for democracy, for parliaments, and, least of all, under the flag of the wolf [a Chechen nationalist symbol incorporated into the ChRI flag]” (Vagapov, 2010a). Validzhanov more explicitly identified establishing Shari’ah as a goal (Validzhanov, 2010), while for Daudov it constituted an “ideal body of laws” and a motivating factor for insurgents (Daudov, 2012). Alongside this, Daudov also established a goal stemming directly from diagnostic framing: “the defence of weak men and women from among the Muslims” (Daudov, 2012). In Asilderov’s statements, too, Shari’ah exists as a clear goal (Asilderov, 2012a, 2012b). Yet, as in the preceding phase, there was no substantive discussion of the topic. For the most part, Shari’ah continued to exist only as a vague rallying cry, with little by way of explanation of what it meant. It was, in essence, a blank canvas onto which audiences could project their own understandings of justice – an inspirational concept, perhaps, but certainly not a political programme of governance.

The key change that we see lies not in the articulation of goals, but in the defence of methods. With the demise of Jama’at Shari’at, depictions of violence became notably less detailed and less bloodthirsty in tone. This moderation was distinctly relative: The leadership continued to threaten to be “uncompromising” in its struggle, pledging to kill “those who sowed all this disorder for power and money” (Kavkazcenter, 2010m) and threatening local security services as the foundation of the entire “*taghut* system” (Kavkazcenter, 2010l). Nevertheless, Daudov displayed a concern for restraint not seen in the early years, insisting that the insurgency did not target women, children, and the elderly, and that “the mujahideen fight only against an armed enemy” (Daudov, 2011). Within leadership statements, violence arguably became normalized, neither requiring detailed explanation nor displaying prior extremes. Alternatives were ruled out, with the fate of the

Kadar Zone cited as proof that agreement with Russia was not worth the paper that it was written on (Kavkazcenter, 2010m). Otherwise, the rhetorical targets of action remained largely unchanged, with threats directed primarily against the security services (Kavkazcenter, 2010l, 2010m); informants and rumour-mongers (Validzhanov, 2010; Suleymanov, 2011; Daudov, 2012; Kavkazcenter, 2012e); those who sold alcohol, drugs, or otherwise spread dishonour (Validzhanov, 2010); and those who spread rumours about the insurgency among student populations abroad (Kavkazcenter, 2012e). A rare external focus emerged only in the wake of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings when – amid reports linking the perpetrators to the Dagestani insurgency – the leadership explicitly distanced itself from the idea that it was fighting against the United States, again identifying Russia as its main enemy (VDagestan.com, 2013). Rather than a shift in the direction of threats made by Dagestani leaders, there was a fading of direction, as explication of an enemy became increasingly rare.

One aspect of the leadership's prognostic framing, however, warrants particular attention: what it didn't contain. It is noteworthy how little time insurgent leaders devoted to justifying attacks on civilians, in particular suicide attacks. Among multiple attacks in Dagestan and Russia with significant civilian casualties, most notable were a twin suicide attack on the Moscow metro in March 2010 and a suicide attack at Moscow's Domodedovo airport in January 2011. These were unambiguously civilian targets, unlike many attacks where civilian casualties could be dismissed as 'collateral damage.' Moreover, they had major repercussions for the insurgency, leading to the IK being designated a terrorist organization by the United States and the United Nations and a de facto ban on insurgent leadership statements in the Russian media. Yet there was virtually no discussion of or justification for these events in leadership statements, save for Daudov describing them as

one of the authorities “sore points.” The consumer of rebel leadership statements would be left only vaguely aware that such attacks had been perpetrated, and at a loss for the justification behind them.

Constrained Inspiration

The Manichean divide that characterized efforts to inspire participation in the first phase persisted into the second. A quote from Daudov captures the fundamental essence of this framing strategy:

Jihad separates the army of the Muslims from the infidels, drawing a line of enmity and hatred. With every passing day, the line separating truth from lie, and *iman* [faith] from disbelief, becomes more and more clear. The best are participating in this war! (Daudov, 2012).

Again, motivational appeals drew directly on a perceived identity, in which the identity was under threat and action to address that threat was a prerequisite for the ability to claim it. Per this reading, the insurgents represent “the chosen ones from among the people” (Vagapov, 2010a), fighting against puppets who had sold their honour, conscience and religion for the miserly rewards of slaves (Kavkazcenter, 2010l; Asilderov, 2012b; Daudov, 2012). Reflecting the link between identity and purpose, Asilderov claimed “you cannot call yourself a Muslim and live by infidel laws” (Asilderov, 2012b).

In this phase, however, we witness the almost complete disappearance of a martyrdom narrative in the statements of emirs and the general leadership. The fight may have remained virtuous, but the rewards that awaited the supposed victor in the struggle were no longer being explicated even in vague terms. A possible reason for this decline lies with the demise of Jama’at Shari’at. The theme of martyrdom was prominent in the output of IK websites (Campana and Ducol, 2015), and the depersonalized nature and focus on specific

2013b, 2013c). Suleymanov insisted that “their customs differ from our customs, our religion from theirs, and nothing unites us,” and claimed that, whereas Dagestanis know their ancestors, Russians, with their supposedly easy women, are clueless (Suleymanov, 2013b). This exclusive focus on Dagestani identity undermined the salience of his messaging to non-Dagestani audiences. At the same time, many of Suleymanov’s statements were in Avar, issued as audio recording with a rolling Russian translation as “video.” Consequently, we find that one of the most important voices remaining within the insurgency limited his own appeal.

Phase Three

Isolated Explanations

The third phase witnessed a further deterioration in explanations of what the insurgency was aiming to change. In one statement, Asilderov alluded to the alleged inherent hostility of the infidels towards Muslims, but this was offered in the context of a bombing raid on an insurgent base (Asilderov, 2013). The Muslims in this sense were the insurgents, not the broader Dagestani population. Similarly, in another communiqué he complained that the security services had started lighting forest fires “to smoke the mujahideen out of the forests” (Asilderov, 2013) – again something that predominantly affected the insurgency. Beyond that, however, he offered nothing by way of explanation, failing to address the circularity of his diagnosis: They cannot justify the existence of an insurgency, since the problems exist only so long as there is an insurgency to experience them. Elsewhere, Central Sector emir Abu Takhir and Southern Sector emir Gasan Abdullayev (Abu Yasir) offered no more than isolated references to grievances, rather than a comprehensive diagnosis (Abdullayev, 2014; Zalitinov, 2014).

It was, once again, Suleymanov who performed most of the work in specifying problems and their sources. Within his statements, two core strands can be identified. First, he sought to position grievances within a global narrative of Islam being under attack from the infidel, claiming “today we can see how the non-believing peoples attack the Muslim *Umma* [global community of Muslims]” (Suleymanov, 2013c). Similarly, he alleged that Muslim sisters were being imprisoned and tortured, and placed this in the context of the treatment of Palestinians by Israelis (Suleymanov, 2014d, 20140830). Second, he returned to the supposedly problematic social mores witnessed in the second phase, attributing blame for the current state of affairs less to the authorities than to the people themselves and their failure to “ban what is forbidden” (Suleymanov, 2014a). He criticized women for dressing in multi-coloured clothes and going outside their homes “without need or necessity,” dismissing their claims to be doing this in order to deceive the infidel (Suleymanov, 2013d).

Redirecting Without Reinterpreting

As in the previous two phases, Shari’ah remained a skeletal goal, devoid of flesh, and jihad was the sole means of achieving it (Abdullayev, 2014; Asilderov, 2013, 2014b; Suleymanov, 2013d, 2014b, 2014d; Zalitinov, 2014). As before, there was no considered debate over what this meant, and little to distinguish the position of one leader from another. It is, however, this very lack of distinction that is significant. From late 2014, Asilderov and Abdullayev were in opposition to Suleymanov, having defected to the Islamic State (IS). The framing literature leads us to expect contestation within and between groups to manifest itself in prognostic framing (Wiktorowicz, 2004a), particularly when actors share the same broad ideological orientation, as was the case with the IK and IS. In

reality, the prognostic landscape that we find is a barren one. Defecting leaders did not propose new solutions, or explain how defecting offered a clearer path to achieving their goals. Asilderov (Asilderov, 2015) alluded to the dilemma posed by IS, namely that all jihadists claim to be fighting for a caliphate and the emirate was merely a staging post en route to that destination. As such, those jihadists who rejected IS faced a more complicated task than its supporters in explaining why they were in favour of a caliphate, but not *this* caliphate. Yet Asilderov did not develop this point in any detail, and there is little in his statements to suggest he was even aware of this broader theoretical contradiction in jihadist ideology. Indeed, explanatory work of any sort was minimal, and this remains true even if one expands the discussion to include lower-ranking leaders (Youngman, 2016). Those who remained loyal to the IK, meanwhile, did not respond to the gradual collapse of their movement with a clearer specification of what they were seeking to achieve or why their approach was superior. Suleymanov accused IS of hypocrisy in applying Shari'ah only to the poor and the weak, rather than itself (Suleymanov, 2014f). However, he focused his attention on who had the authority to determine strategy, not on the strategy itself, and contestation is only evident in the defecting leaders' rejection of that authority. Even the actual application of IS' interpretation of Shari'ah did not stimulate an explanation of Suleymanov's own interpretation. Leaders on either side of the IK-IS divide failed to develop a political programme of action – a recurring theme throughout all the phases examined here, but particularly apparent in the face of apparent competition over the direction of the insurgency.

Dependent Emotion Versus Cold Rationality

Where we find a clear distinction between Asilderov and Abdullayev on the one hand and Suleymanov on the other is in their efforts to inspire participation and support. The weakness of explanation in the statements of defecting IS emirs left them almost entirely reliant on the emotional appeal of the “caliphate” to justify their position. This appeal was inherent to the very concept of the caliphate and central to IS propaganda, but was also explicitly referenced by defecting leaders in terms of how news of the proclamation made them feel (Youngman, 2016). At the same time, it was highly dependent on external narratives, piggybacking off IS’ success in mobilizing and attempting – without evident success – to redirect its appeal back into the region. When it came to independent efforts to inspire participation, we can see the limitations of Asilderov’s abilities. Multiple statements continued to reference the sustained pressure facing the insurgency and the enduring nature of jihad in spite of these (Asilderov, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). Yet, in addressing practical concerns, Asilderov focused on survival as if it were a means in and of itself. His claim that the insurgency was growing year-on-year, meanwhile, was so at odds with general perceptions by this stage that it would have required far greater rhetorical skills than he evidently possessed to be convincing. It was the rise of jihad *elsewhere*, rather than the trajectory of the North Caucasus insurgency, that he cited as primary evidence of change (Asilderov, 2014b). His narrative of endurance, coupled with denial of the practical realities, may have sought to assuage concerns within the insurgency, but it is hard to see how they intended to inspire others to join. Indeed, at times Asilderov’s communiqués displayed a marked lack of awareness or indifference to audiences other than his fellow insurgents. Even when it came to such a major decision as changing allegiances, his instruction to those not on the ground was, in essence, to mind their own business and keep

their mouths shut (Asilderov, 2015).

Suleymanov's approach, both in general and in response to IS – was marked by a high reliance on rational argumentation and, indeed, in some cases efforts to constrain rather than inspire involvement. A distinct feature of Suleymanov's communiqués is what could be called anti-motivational framing, i.e. explicit arguments telling people not to mobilize. Such framing can be found elsewhere, such as Umarov's discouragement of efforts to join up with the insurgency because of concerns over operational security (Youngman, 2019). In Suleymanov's statements, however, they were directed at a specific community, namely women, and used to reinforce calls to action towards another, men. He claimed that jihad for women consisted of "educating your children and concerning yourself with your husband's home," not of going outside unaccompanied, much less participating in operations (Suleymanov, 2013d). Although he acknowledged that "some emirs see benefit" in using women for operations, he nevertheless criticized people for abandoning jihad and thereby creating this extreme necessity (Suleymanov, 2014d). He therefore sought to shame people into action – an inherently emotional appeal. At the same time, his overall method of argumentation was a highly scholarly one, focusing on interpretations of scripture and the work of jihadist scholars. In combination for his enduring preference for Avar-language "videos" with rolling text, his rhetorical style was exceptionally dry. If injustice "focuses on the righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul" (Gamson, 1992:3), Suleymanov's addresses almost appeared designed to put the fire back out again.

Mobilizing Structures

Phase One: Depersonalized Leadership and a Local Focus

The three leaders during the first phase – Elgar Malachiyev (Abdul Madzhid), Umar Sheykhulayev (Muaz), and Umlat Magomedov (Al Bara) – each occupied the post of Dagestani emir for less than a year, and between them issued only one statement. Qadi Saadullayev appears to have operated for roughly the same period, issuing three statements (two considered here). Moreover, of the three leaders, only Malachiyev attracted substantive media attention. In considering their individual biographies and how these may have informed their ideological position, therefore, we possess only limited information. The initial networks that formed Jama'at Shari'at were closely linked to the Chechen insurgency. At the same time, they were to a degree distinct from some of the Salafi communities that had been engaged in earlier conflicts with the authorities. Malachiyev, much like his predecessor, Rappani Khalilov (Rabbani), reportedly fought in both Chechen wars. When Khalilov returned to Dagestan in 2005, the focus of conflict started to shift from the north to the relatively peaceful south, and Khalilov tasked Malachiyev with unifying the disparate armed groups operating in the region (Novaya Gazeta, 2011a). When Khalilov was killed in September 2007, Malachiyev assumed the leadership of the Dagestan Sector of the Caucasus Front, which swiftly transformed into the IK's Dagestan Vilayyat. Malachiyev was a native of Azerbaijan's Zakatalskiy Rayon, which borders Dagestan, and was likely able to draw on kinship ties in consolidating his control over groups in his main area of operation, the Azeri-dominated Derbentskiy Rayon. Certainly, he was an important part of trans-regional networks, reportedly re-entering Azerbaijan in 2008 and 2009 to facilitate the transfer of 30 Azerbaijan fighters through Dagestan and

Chechnya to Ingushetia (Kommersant, 2009a). According to Russian security services, this operation was aided by Doctor Mukhammad, a leader of the IK's foreign fighter networks who had joined the Chechen insurgency in 1999 and who travelled to Dagestan in 2008 to strengthen cross-republican networks (Kommersant, 2009a). Azerbaijani law enforcement, meanwhile, conducted a major operation against Malachiyev in August 2008, accusing him of organizing a terrorist attack on Baku's Abu Bakr mosque (Lenta.ru, 2008a).¹⁶ As such, Malachiyev was an important node in the IK's trans-Caucasian and transnational networks and activities, both in his own right and through his close operational connection to Doctor Mukhammad. Malachiyev was killed in a shootout in Magaramkentskiy Rayon in September 2008.

Much less is known about the other three leadership figures in this phase. According to Kavkazcenter's eulogy Sheykhulayev joined the insurgency in 2002; no reference was made to any involvement with the Chechen branch of the insurgency (Kavkazcenter, 2009a). Russian business daily Kommersant, meanwhile, claimed that he was a close associate of former Jama'at Shari'at leader Rasul Makasharipov (Muslim) (Kommersant, 2006a). Liberal newspaper Novaya Gazeta claimed Sheykhulayev was closely linked to both Makasharipov and Khalilov (Novaya Gazeta, 2007a). However, we have little additional information on him prior to his death in February 2009. Even less is known about Magomedov, killed in December 2009, and Saadullayev, killed in September 2009, beyond a supposedly close relationship between the two and Magomedov's marriage to Dzhennet Abdurakhmanova, who went on to perpetrate the March 2010 Moscow metro

¹⁶ The imam of the Salafi Abu Bakr mosque since 1998 has been Gamet Suleymanov, of whom Tikhomirov was a vocal critic. IK involvement in the attack is therefore plausible. At the same time, the Azerbaijani authorities were engaged in their own conflict with the mosque's leadership and used the attack as a pretext for closing the mosque (Wiktor-Mach, 2017:125-126).

suicide attack (Kommersant, 2010a). We are thus left to consider, in the main, an absent or depersonalized leadership.

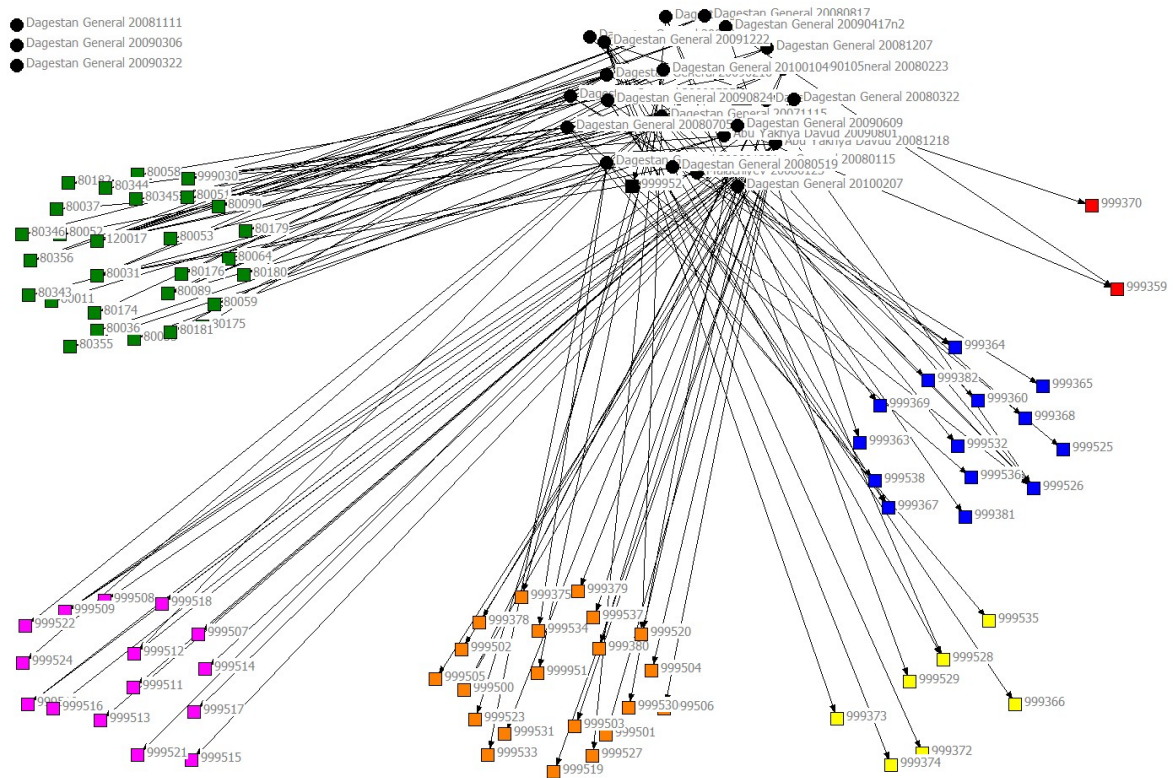


Figure 16. *The intellectual world of Dagestani leaders – Phase one. Visualization is by category. Green = insurgent actors, blue = Dagestani, red = Russian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly, yellow = historical. Black nodes are the communiqués.*

In the absence of statements directly attributable to individual leaders, we are limited in our ability to assess how these biographies may have impacted their efforts to shape meanings and interpretations, and therefore the ideology, of the conflicts that they were involved in. Yet, if Malachiyev was integrated into regional networks, this was clearly not reflected in leadership communiqués at this time. Throughout the entirety of the first phase, there were only negligible references to actors based outside Dagestan. There were zero references to non-insurgent actors based in other North Caucasian republics, and the only

insurgent actor mentioned was Umarov – in a total of 7 different communiqués, all of which established his authority over the Dagestani branch (Kavkazcenter, 2007c, 2008j, 2008o, 2008q, 2009k, 2009o, 2010j). By contrast, 14 non-insurgent and 27 insurgent actors in Dagestan were mentioned – in both cases, most frequently in the context of their deaths. Of these, Interior Minister Magomedtagirov stands out as a particular target of insurgent acrimony, being referenced in five separate communiqués (Kavkazcenter, 2007c, 2008j, 2008n, 2009p, 2010k). Thus, we can see the diagnostic focus on grievances reflected in an intellectual world that identified Magomedtagirov as their primary source. Most of the other references to non-insurgent actors within the republic were similarly to various members of the security services.

By contrast, Dagestani President Mukhu Aliyev was mentioned in passing in only one communiqué, indicating the broad neglect of political versus armed struggle. Nor do Russian or global actors attract much attention. The only Russian actors to be mentioned were Valeriy Lipinskiy, a general killed in Dagestan in December 2008 (Kavkazcenter, 2009k), and President Putin, who is referenced only in passing (Kavkazcenter, 2009r). No actors beyond Russia's boundaries feature at all. In describing how the world is and how it should be, it is clear from leadership communiqués that the world in question is predominantly a Dagestani one, in which the security services are a key actor. Historically and intellectually, too, we see narrow horizons, with scholarly references focusing on the Companions of the Prophet and hadith compilers, and brief appearances by Stalin, Goebbels and the aforementioned Muslim leaders in Dagestan. Indeed, beyond these, the only other historical figure outside Dagestan to be mentioned was Ahmed Yassin, a founder of Hamas, whose praise of the martyrdom of his son is used to reinforce the insurgency's own martyrdom narratives (Kavkazcenter, 2008i). Overall, the leadership's intellectual

world is a sparsely populated one, with a mere 3.26 people referenced per communiqué.

Phase Two: Contrasting Operational and Intellectual Networks

In the first part of the phase, the Dagestani leadership continued to experience high turnover. The next three leaders – Vagapov, Validzhanov, and Daudov – again each lasted less than a year in the role. They were, however, more active in shaping interpretations, issuing a total of eight statements (five included here). The first leader, former Central Sector emir Vagapov, moreover, simultaneously assumed the role of IK qadi. Born in Gubden in 1975, Vagapov reportedly studied the Qur'an and Arabic alongside his Soviet education in Dagestan, before travelling to Pakistan between 1994 and 1997 for further theological and language (Urdu and Farsi) training (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010a). As such, his leadership claims were reinforced by significant “educational capital” (Morris and Staggenborg, 2007:175). Russia's National Antiterrorism Committee (NAK) claimed that he received combat training at the same time (RIA Novosti, 2010a), though it is impossible to corroborate this information. Upon his return to Dagestan, he opened a madrasah in Gubden and simultaneously established links with foreign fighter leaders in Chechnya, training in Khattab's camps for some time (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010a; Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2011a). On his return to Dagestan, no later than 2004, he organized a combat jama'at in Gubden and subordinated his group to Khalilov when the latter started centralizing leadership of the insurgency in 2005 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010a). Much like Malachiyev, therefore, Vagapov enjoyed long-standing and trans-regional insurgent links. Indeed, a photo of him alongside Doctor Mukhammad (Moskovskiy Komsomolets, 2010a) points to his involvement in many of the same networks, and he married Mukhammad's former wife, Maryam Sharipova, perpetrator of the March 2010 Moscow metro attack (Moskovskiy

Komsomolets, 2010a). Vagapov himself was killed in a special operation in Gubden in August 2010.

Both Validzhanov and Daudov similarly boasted extensive combat experience within the insurgency. Validzhanov reportedly trained with Khattab and fought in the Second Chechen War alongside Abu Dzhafar, participating in the invasion of Dagestan (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2011a; Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011a). Having returned to Dagestan in 2003, he joined Makasharipov's group and acted as deputy to Malachiyev (Novaya Gazeta, 2011a). He subsequently replaced Malachiyev as Southern Sector emir, simultaneously acting as Vagapov's deputy. He was killed when security services attempted to stop his car in Levashinskiy Rayon in April 2011. Daudov, by contrast, was born in Gubden and had fought in Afghanistan as a Soviet conscript. He linked up with the insurgency much later than the other leaders, joining Vagapov's group in 2008 (Kommersant, 2012a). He was also relatively old, aged 51 when he died in February 2012. Nevertheless, we can see how all three leaders enjoyed combat capital by the time they assumed the leadership, and were all involved in the same overlapping networks. Additionally, Daudov had familial links within the insurgency, with three sons who also joined and were killed fighting, and a wife who was killed while allegedly preparing a suicide attack in Moscow in late 2010 (Kommersant, 2012a). Both Vagapov and Daudov were therefore personally as well as operationally linked to the suicide attacks they devoted so little time to explaining.

Vagapov however, was arguably the only leader to combine educational and combat capital, and among subsequent leaders these functions appear to have been largely split. After his death, the role of IK qadi transferred to Aliaskhab Kebekov, who was a theological rather than military leader. Suleymanov appears to have shared much the same background, as reflected in his dual role as Dagestan qadi and Mountain Sector emir. Born

in Gimry in 1976, he reportedly joined the insurgency in 2005, but surrendered to the authorities as part of an amnesty in 2008 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008a). According to Kebekov, both men (re-)joined the insurgency in 2010, following the persecution and death of their mentor, influential preacher Murtazali Magomedov (Kebekov, 2014a). Given the low levels of trust within the insurgency, it seems likely that Suleymanov's decision to surrender would have damaged his credentials. Military leadership, meanwhile, passed to Asilderov, who was born in 1981 in Kalmykia but moved to Buynakskiy Rayon's Karamakhi at a young age, and Abdullayev, born in 1977 in Tabasaranskiy Rayon. Asilderov originally led a group operating in the Kadar region (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2016a), but did not possess a theological education – something evident from his framing strategy. In 2007, he was acquitted on charges of illegal weapons possession and aiding the insurgency, after which he went underground (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2016a). Prior to assuming the overall leadership, Asilderov acted as Central Sector emir and Daudov's deputy (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2016a). Abdullayev reportedly joined in 2009 and operated predominantly in Derbentskiy Rayon, assuming leadership of the Southern Sector in 2011 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2014a; Life News, 2016a).

of the IK¹⁷ – explain an increased focus on regional affairs. Vagapov sided firmly with Umarov in this dispute, arguing that it was not for Chechen rebels alone to determine the IK emir and calling on the dissenting emirs to resubordinate themselves to Umarov (Vagapov, 2010a). The backing of emirs outside Chechnya was arguably critical to ensuring Umarov’s survival.

Nevertheless, there was not a significant change in the breadth of the network – with 77 references, an average of 3.55 per communiqué – and overall the Dagestani leadership remained focused on Dagestani actors. Only three Russian actors are mentioned – Presidents Putin and Medvedev, as well as DJ Romeo – and each only in passing (Suleymanov, 2011; Daudov, 2012). Similarly, only two global actors, Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnayev, feature, as the Dagestani leadership sought to distance itself from the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings. As with the IK leadership split, this was as much a case of the outside world intruding into that of the Dagestani leadership as a genuine interest in external affairs. However, in its internal focus, there was a slight diversification in the political figures who were mentioned. Rather than the predominance of the security services witnessed in the first phase, members of the political elite such as President Magomedsalam Magomedov, Deputy Prime Minister Rizvan Kurbanov, and Makhachkala Mayor Said Amirov also feature. Daudov, in particular, attacks Magomedov and Kurbanov for their public positions against the insurgency, threatening them over the mobilization of anti-insurgent militias and threats that these officials directed against the insurgency itself

¹⁷ On 1 August 2010, prominent IK website Kavkazcenter published a video in which Umarov resigned in favour of Chechen rebel leader Aslambek Vadalov (Umarov, 2010a). Several senior Chechen leaders, as well as foreign fighter leader Mukhannad, welcomed Umarov’s decision and offered their support to Vadalov. Shortly afterwards, however, Umarov issued a second statement, retracting his resignation and calling the original statement “fabricated” (Umarov, 2010b). The result was a split in the leadership of the IK that Umarov blamed on Mukhannad (Umarov, 2010c), which was only resolved in July 2011, after Mukhannad’s death.

(Daudov, 2011, 2012). Daudov also alleged that Magomedov had previously contacted Vagapov with a message that amounted to a request to “blow up in the Caucasus what and who you want, just not in Moscow” (Daudov, 2012).

Phase Three: Excessive Continuity

The final phase witnessed considerable personnel continuity. Although the insurgency continued to suffer attrition at the lower and even sector levels, the three main insurgency actors – Asilderov, Abdullayev, and Suleymanov – were in position from the beginning of the phase through to the end of the period of study. The most significant senior leadership changes came as a result of the splintering and weakening of the insurgency. Kamil Saidov (Said Arakhanskiy) replaced Asilderov as IK Dagestani emir in May 2014 and Gadzhi Abdulayev (Abu Dudzhana Gimrinskiy) briefly replaced Suleymanov as Mountain Sector emir in July 2015 after the latter ascended to overall leadership of the IK, before being killed the following month. The leadership of both men was relatively short and occurred at a time when the IK was already in terminal decline, and their rhetorical and operational impact on the insurgency was limited.

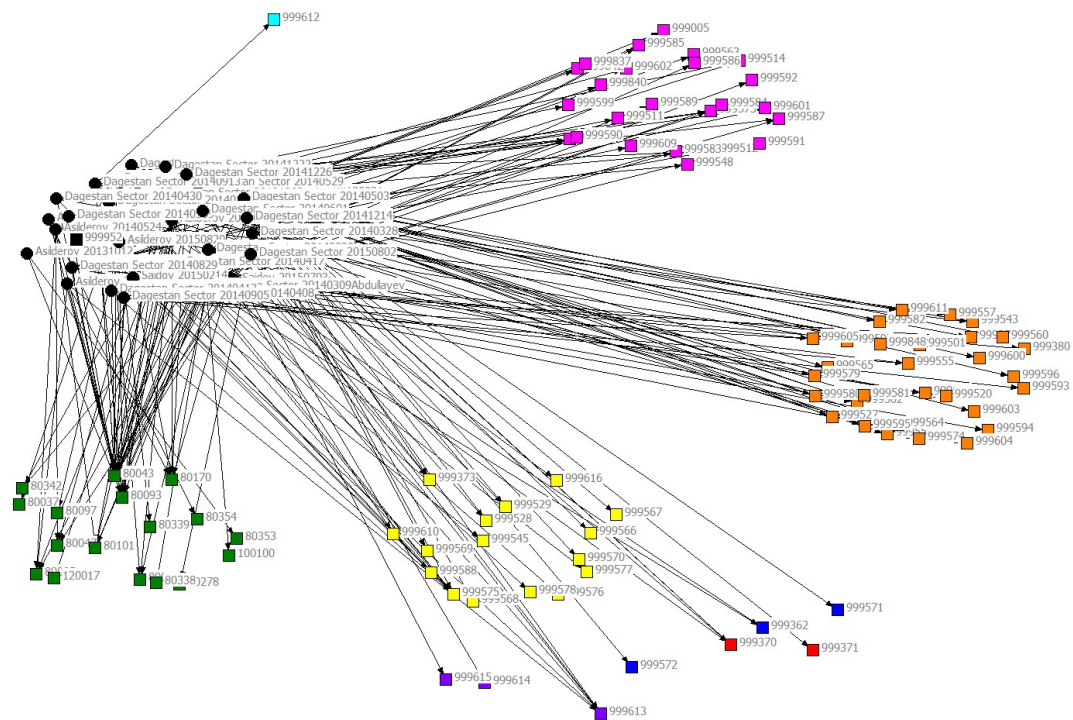


Figure 18. *The intellectual world of Dagestani leaders – Phase three. Green = insurgent actors, blue = Dagestani, red = Russian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly, yellow = historical, turquoise = regional, purple = global. Black nodes are the communiqués.*

Intellectually, there was also significant continuity – indeed, more so than one would expect. The Syrian conflict had an enormous impact on the North Caucasus insurgency. On a practical level, the region witnessed the outflow of significant numbers of people, relative to the insurgency if not the broader population (Youngman and Moore, 2017). On a rhetorical level, we see the Syrian conflict dominating debates, as actors aligned themselves either with IS or, in the case of those who remained loyal to the IK, AQ (Youngman, 2016). Given these trends, we might expect to witness a significant expansion of intellectual horizons. Yet leaders did not, on the whole, devote much effort to shaping the meanings of these conflicts through reference to those involved in them. Only three global actors are referenced: Al-Baghdadi, who is mentioned in six communiqués; and Ayman al-Zawahiri

and Bashar al-Asad, who are each mentioned in just one. Al-Baghdadi's prominence is a result of allegiance to or rejection of IS being expressed through the pledging or denial of *bayat* to the "caliph" (Asilderov, 2014d, 2015; Suleymanov, 2014f, 2014g). Beyond this, however, we see no references to actors in Syria, testifying to the limited engagement with on-the-ground realities. Instead, it is in engagement with jihadist ideologist that we see the greatest shift, reflecting Suleymanov's deferral to jihadist scholarly authority. Ibn Taymiyyah again features, but so too do such notable figures such as Said Qutb, Hani al-Sibai, Abu Qatada al-Filistini, and Suleyman al-Ulwan. Indeed, even the reference to Al-Zawahiri is principally in the context of deferring to his authority as a jihadi scholar, rather than as a militant leader. Beyond the Syrian context, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabist movement, also assumes prominence by virtue of Suleymanov devoting a lecture series to his book *Nawaaqid al Islam* (Nullifiers of Islam).

The expansion and globalization of the intellectual world of the insurgency is, however, confined to the scholarly domain, and comes at the expense of political realities. The only Russian actors to feature were again Putin and Medvedev, the former exclusively in Suleymanov's statements as passing references to something malevolent, and the latter just once, alongside Putin as co-malevolent (Suleymanov, 2013c, 2014b, 2014c, 2014e). The only non-insurgent regional actor referenced was Ramzan Kadyrov, who is briefly dismissed by Abdullayev as Putin's puppet (Abdullayev, 2012), while the only insurgent regional actors are Umarov, in the context of his death, and a brief reference to Tikhomirov in Ingushetia (Abdullayev, 2014). Yet this did not signal a return to the focus on Dagestani, and particularly security service, actors witnessed in the first phase: The only non-insurgent actors in the republic to feature were President Ramazan Abdulatipov and two religious leaders, hugely influential Sufi leader Said Afandi Chirkeyskiy, killed by a suicide attack in

August 2012, and former Untsulkulskiy Rayon imam Magomed Abdulgafurov. Even within the non-scholarly output of Asilderov, we do not see a preference for local actors. Rather, Asilderov's statements are notable for the extraordinary narrowness of his horizons: He almost exclusively referenced people with whom he was in direct contact and, indeed, often could literally see at the moment at which he was speaking. The intellectual world of Asilderov, the man who triggered a mass move towards alliance with a global insurgent actor, did not extend far beyond his line of sight.

Political Opportunities

Phase One: Hostile Interactions and Unstructured Engagement

The first phase broadly corresponded to the presidency of Mukhu Aliyev, who assumed office in February 2006 and governed until February 2010. Aliyev's presidency was characterized by largely hostile interactions between the security services and the human rights community. The relationship between the authorities and the human rights community, moreover, was shaped by considerations of insurgent activity. Central to it was the emergence of, and official reaction to, a group called the Mothers of Dagestan for Human Rights (hereafter, simply Mothers of Dagestan). The group was formed in summer 2007 by the female relatives of young men who had disappeared or been killed in the republic, in protest at the authorities' perceived failure to investigate and prosecute human rights violations and security service abuses. On 1 August 2007, two of the group's founders, Gyulnara Rustamova and Svetlana Isayeva, met with senior officials to discuss their complaints and a planned rally in Makhachkala. The meeting was not productive, and when the rally took place over official objections, the security services forcibly dispersed it and detained three people. Several days later, several group members started a hunger

strike, calling it off only when their health deteriorated and they were met by high-ranking officials.

These events largely set the tone for relations throughout Aliyev's presidency, with human rights activists alleging that there was an orchestrated campaign to discredit Mothers of Dagestan. In May 2008, local newspaper *Novoye Delo* published an anonymous interview with an official who criticized the group. Rustamova and another activist threatened to sue, alleging the article was "ordered" by the security services (Chernovik, 2008a). In June, Aliyev expressed a willingness to meet Rustamova, but simultaneously criticized her plans to brief the European Parliament on the human rights situation in the republic. Journalists reported that Magomedtagirov responded to Aliyev's question "what does she need?" with "a bullet to the head," and Aliyev himself issued a more bureaucratic threat, instructing the Justice Ministry to investigate the organization (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008i). Most subsequent interactions were of a similarly hostile nature. A Mothers of Dagestan employee was killed in a security service operation in October 2008, accused of being an insurgent (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008n). Rustamova herself was interrogated after her brother was killed in another operation the following month (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008o). In January 2009, Rustamova's sister was arrested, again accused of ties to the insurgency (Chernovik, 2001a). The same month, the group accused the FSB of organizing a local and national media campaign against it by portraying it as the insurgency's public face, financed by the West (Chernovik, 2009a). Indeed, Magomedtagirov directly accused Mothers of Dagestan of aiding the insurgency (Chernovik, 2009c). In August, the group's offices were targeted in an arson attack that Isayeva linked to the authorities (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009i), and in March 2010 a Mothers of Dagestan employee was detained without explanation (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010i).

These hostile engagements shaped the broader interactions between the human rights community and the authorities. In July 2008, Moscow human rights actors appealed to Aliyev to guarantee the safety of Mothers of Dagestan employees (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008l). In February 2009, Lev Ponomarev, a Moscow-based activist, again alleged an orchestrated campaign against it (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009c). Occasional meetings between activists and the authorities did occur, including in September 2009, when Aliyev pledged to investigate human rights violations by the security services (Chernovik, 2009d). Such meetings, however, were usually characterized by a divergence in understandings and agendas. This was illustrated by a March 2009 meeting between Aliyev, security service heads, a human rights delegation from Moscow, and representatives of civil society. One member of the delegation criticized officials for their unwillingness to talk, while a senior official criticized human rights activists for ignoring earlier security service deaths and Aliyev claimed prerogative in addressing human rights issues (Chernovik, 2009b). Isayeva, meanwhile, claimed she was only invited on the insistence of Moscow-based activist Lyudmila Alekseyeva, who in turn criticized the authorities for inviting only those civil society members with whom it was convenient for them to work (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009f).

We can therefore see that, during Aliyev's presidency, perceptions of the opportunities for affecting change through engagement with the authorities were likely to be extremely limited. The security services responded with force and various forms of harassment of those it accused of engagement with the insurgency. There was limited evidence of competing factions within the elites, with Aliyev criticizing a failure to investigate abductions, and the general prosecutor and human rights ombudsman even furnishing proof of security service involvement in them (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2007a). Yet this did not appear to extend to the presence of allies within the elites who were willing or able to promote a

human rights agenda. Magomedtagirov, by contrast, was clearly hostile, attacking the media and displaying no interest in addressing concerns or increasing accountability for the violations that were widely perceived to be feeding support for the insurgency, and that were central to Jama'at Shari'at's grievance narrative. Where dialogue with the authorities did occur, it was mostly ad hoc in nature and does not appear to have produced any tangible results. Most of the examples of more constructive engagement, moreover, were with Moscow-based rather than local actors. Whatever the credence of accusations against Mothers of Dagestan, their treatment signalled limited potential for seeking redress for grievances through legal means. Jama'at Shari'at may have been anyway unwilling to countenance engaging in political struggle, but there is little indication that it would have encountered an environment conducive to a political wing even if it had.

Phase Two: From Positive Trends and Missed Opportunities to Closed Doors

The arrival of Magomedsalam Magomedov to the presidency (20 February 2010-28 January 2013), and the appointment of Kurbanov as deputy prime minister responsible for police and security, signalled a more tolerant official attitude towards human rights concerns. The hard-line faction, meanwhile, had been weakened by Magomedtagirov's killing in June 2009. These personnel changes occurred in tandem with – indeed, reflected – a broader liberalization at the federal level following Medvedev's ascension to the Russian presidency and an increased emphasis on addressing the root causes of insurgent violence (Campana, 2013). In other words, they occurred within a broader atmosphere of positive changes that would have shaped the perceptions of the opportunities available to local actors. In January 2010, Medvedev created a new North Caucasus Federal District, comprising Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachayevo-Cherkessia,

North Ossetia-Alania, and Stavropol Kray. To head it, he appointed Aleksandr Khloponin, an economic manager rather than someone with a security service background. Both Medvedev and Khloponin signalled federal support for increased engagement with civil society, indicating a pan-Russian expansion of the political opportunities available to human rights actors. Thus, in May 2010, they met with Russian Public Chamber members and civil society representatives, a meeting that North Caucasian activists praised for its lack of restrictions on the topics that could be discussed (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010d, 2010e). In June 2011, the Russian Presidential Council for Developing Civil Society and Human Rights held a session in Makhachkala. At the session, Rustamova – who had broken away from Mothers of Dagestan to co-found, with Aysha Selimkhanovaya, a new organization, Pravozaashchita – advocated for the creation of a centre to help women whose husbands had been killed in special operations or detained (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011i). The following month, Medvedev himself chaired a session of the council in Nalchik (Chernovik, 2011c). Thus, while the liberalizing drive should not be overemphasized – the use of force remained an important component of counterterrorism framing (Campana, 2013) – there was a clear impetus for change from Moscow that shaped the broad context of relations between the Dagestani authorities and human rights actors.

Under Magomedov, we therefore find more evidence of constructive official engagement with human rights actors, as well as clearer divisions within the elites. In March 2010, Kurbanov met with Isayeva and Rustamova. After the meeting, Isayeva commented that such meetings had previously been ruled out, and now she perceived a willingness to cooperate (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010c). In September, the president's press secretary attended a rally organized by journalists, human rights activists and lawyers (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010f), contributing to the impression that the authorities were willing

to listen to concerns. In April 2011, Magomedov met with a human rights delegation from Moscow and acknowledged that the security services did not always operate within the law. A member of the delegation praised Kurbanov for responding to concerns raised by activists (Chernovik, 2011b). Later the same month, activists met with the heads of the security services. In July, Magomedov gave an extensive interview (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011k) to Grigoriy Shvedov, chief editor of Kavkazskiy Uzel – one of the few independent media outlets in the region, and one closely associated with the human rights community. This appeared designed to signal a general shift in the approach of the authorities towards more constructive engagement.

At the same time, conflictual relations did not entirely disappear, particularly on the part of the security services. In April 2010, in the wake of the Moscow metro attack, Russian tabloid *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published an article accusing the organization of recruiting for the insurgency. The 22 people it identified as being “at risk” of becoming suicide bombers included Rustamova (Chernovik, 2010a), suggesting ongoing efforts to discredit the organization. In April 2011, police detained Isayeva’s husband, while she trapped herself in the car to avoid the security services (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011e). In December, Derbent police detained a Pravozaščita employee (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011l). Nor did increased engagement necessarily translate into shared understandings and agendas. During the April 2011 meeting, for example, prominent Moscow-based activist Oleg Orlov accused the security services of being more concerned with protecting their own reputations than human rights. Magomedov, in turn, defended anti-Salafi vigilantism and described collective punishment as a local tradition, arguing “I do not agree that terror should never be answered with terror” (Chernovik, 2011b).

One of the most significant initiatives during Magomedov’s tenure signalled the limits

of the political opportunities available to human rights actors even at times of apparent liberalization. In November 2010, Magomedov created a Rehabilitation Commission, headed by Kurbanov, which aimed to provide a formal mechanism for facilitating the disengagement of insurgents. According to one human rights activist interviewed, it constituted a recognition that relying exclusively on force, on “state terror,” in combatting the insurgency was a “dead end” (Interview HR 201603001). Yet membership was dominated by state employees and, in particular, representatives of the security services, and no human rights actors were included. Abbas Kebedov, arguably the most significant non-state member given his ties to the republic’s Salafi communities, said he did not understand the commission’s role, expected nothing from it, and had not been consulted prior to inclusion (Chernovik, 2010c). Nor did reporting on commission activities indicate any extensive informal engagement with rights activists, at least prior to the appearance of city- and district-level counterparts. Thus, while many activists like Isayeva (Chernovik, 2010b) provisionally welcomed the Commission, and it sent an important signal to society — that the state is not just a mechanism of repression (Interview HR 201603001) and that it was possible to publicly debate responses to the insurgency — it represented a top-down initiative rather than genuine engagement with civil society. It did not signal the creation of formal mechanisms through which organizations could influence policies and practices, and, indeed it lacked a clear legal framework. It also illustrated a recurring feature of political opportunities throughout the region, namely a high level of dependency on the will of individual politicians. A clear demonstration of this was that Kurbanov continued to head the commission even after quitting his deputy premiership to take up a role as Russian State Duma deputy (Chernovik, 2011d). Finally, in considering both the commission and broader policies towards the insurgency, they appeared primarily concerned with

persuading support communities, not actual fighters, to disengage (Interview JO 201603001, JO 201603002). Threats were directed against those who remained (YouTube, 2014) and they were not offered *political* opportunities for achieving their goals and affecting change. Rather, the intention appeared to be to persuade them to abandon the political arena entirely.

Just as changes at the federal centre heavily influenced political opportunities at the start of the phase, so did they affect its end. The return of Putin to the Russian presidency and the priority afforded to securing the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi triggered a reorientation away from “soft” policies towards a security service-driven response to threats (Orrttung and Zhemukhov, 2017). The final year of Magomedov’s tenure as president was characterized by a lack of significant developments, either positive or negative. The federal-level changes, however, were eventually reflected, as in 2010, in personnel changes, with Ramazan Abdulatipov becoming Dagestani head (28 January 2013-3 October 2017). Symbolically, shortly after taking over, Abdulatipov declared that the rehabilitation commissions had played an “insignificant role” and proposed reorienting them to focus more on prevention (Chernovik, 2013a). According to one interviewee, they transformed into “an amorphous, incomprehensible commission for resolving all disputed issues” (Interview HR 201603001). More significantly from the perspective of human rights actors, the end of the phase witnessed the start of intensified pressure on Mothers of Dagestan and Pravozashchita. In May 2013, the security services detained Buynaksk-based Pravozashchita activist Zarema Bagautdinova. A court then fined her 300 roubles for violating the city’s counterterrorism regime (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2013d, 2013f). In June, the security services searched Rustamova’s house (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2013e, 2013i). The following month, police again detained Bagautdinova, accusing her of aiding and recruiting

for the insurgency (Chernovik, 2013b). Selimkhanovaya linked the case to her human rights work, while Orlov accused the new Dagestani authorities of pressuring human rights activists and attempting to silence the main source of information on security service activity in Buynaksk (Chernovik, 2013c).

Phase Three: The Triumph of the Hardliners

The negative developments that characterized the end of the second phase continued into the third. In September 2013, the security services raided Selimkhanovaya's house and took her and her husband in for questioning; the same month, Rustamova claimed that a "provocateur" had tried to pass her a message from a purported insurgent emir (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2013i). Memorial declared Bagautdinova a political prisoner, claiming her prosecution was "based on the falsification of evidence of her alleged offence and was undertaken solely because of her non-violent civic activity" (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2013j). Nevertheless, in May 2014 a closed court sentenced her to five years in prison, despite numerous inconsistencies in the case (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2014f). In September, Isayeva reported that police had informally visited her house several times, which she interpreted as an effort to pressure Mothers of Dagestan over a case it was involved in (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2014g). In late 2014, another Pravozaščita employee reported that security services were regularly visiting her mother's house, and that they had tried to detain her in November (Chernovik, 2014).

Late 2013 and particularly 2014 also witnessed a significant ratcheting up of pressure on Salafi communities, as demonstrated by a sharp increase in the number of detentions around mosques. Such incidents occurred sporadically as early as March 2011, when approximately 100 people were detained at a mosque in Shamkhal (Kavkazskiy Uzel,

2011b), and throughout 2012, but were geographically isolated, possibly indicating the prerogatives of individual police chiefs. From late 2013 onwards, and beyond the period of study, however, they assumed a more widespread character.

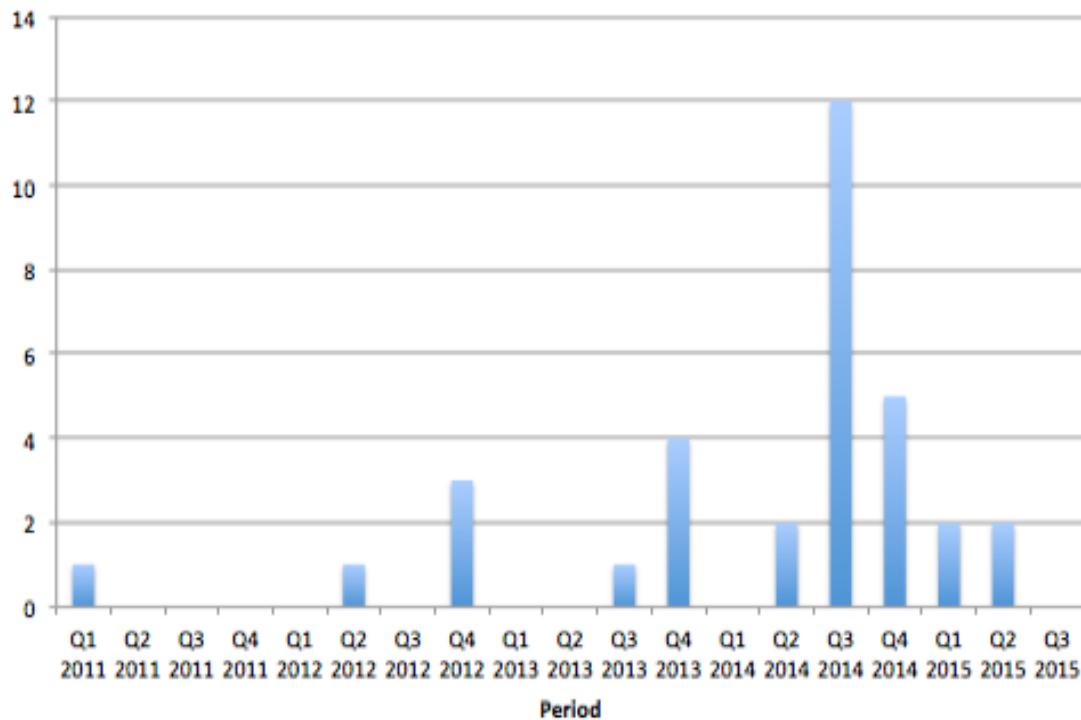


Figure 19. Number of incidents of mass detentions around mosques in Dagestan by year and quarter. Statistics compiled from local media reporting.

Mass detentions occurred in Buynaksk and Derbent, while isolated incidents occurred in multiple districts. It was, however, alleged Salafi mosques in Makhachkala that bore the brunt of the pressure. Moreover, many incident reports referenced the security service practice of maintaining *profuchety*, lists containing the biographical and DNA data of suspected extremists. Although such measures were initially linked to efforts to secure the Winter Olympics, they extended well beyond it (International Crisis Group, 2016; Ortung and Zhemukhov, 2017). Orlov claimed that,

For some time, another method was in operation – they tried to conduct antiterrorist measures within the framework of the law, a commission for adapting militants, those desiring to put down their weapons and return to

civilian life, was in operation. This model was rejected (Memorial, 2015a).

Thus, at the same time as political opportunities appeared to be shrinking for human rights activists, so too would did the space available to other actors, and even those efforts to persuade those linked to the insurgency to disengage were taken off the table.

Framing Political Opportunities

Across the three phases, we see clear changes that would have affected perceptions of political opportunities. Even in the period of relative liberalization, there was no genuine political competition or a willingness to allow access to power to those outside of the political elites. Nevertheless, although changes were relative, they were tangible, and we can see considerable differences in the space afforded to human rights actors, including those suspected of links to the insurgency, and their ability to engage with power holders. Indeed, the opening up of the public space and the permitting of debate over combatting the insurgency was arguably more significant in the second phase than any concrete policy changes. In the final phase, many of the doors that had opened up became closed and political opportunities were again characterized predominantly by their absence.

These changes, however, do not find their reflection in insurgent leadership communiqués, and one of the most compelling features of the framing of political opportunities is its absence. Jama'at Shari'at rejected the very notion of political struggle claiming this “only means accepting the legitimacy of aggression and introduces discord into the ranks of Muslims” (Kavkazcenter, 2008o). In one statement, it lamented that Dagestanis are “not in a position today to influence either the social, much less the political, organization of society” because all the power lies in the hands of the “infidel” (Kavkazcenter, 2009r). In another, following Magomedov's move to the presidency, it

insisted that “changing one puppet for another changes nothing,” because each new leadership was as corrupt and sinful as their predecessors (Kavkazcenter, 2010m). Yet Jama’at Shari’at’s rejection was based as much on the identity of the power holders in the republic as on specific political realities. After Jama’at Shari’at’s demise, we see very little discussion of the changing political dynamics in the republic, either in terms of directly rejecting their significance or offering a renewed rhetorical commitment to their method. Perhaps most surprisingly – given that it aimed to undermine the insurgency’s support base and draw away movement members with less than total commitment to the cause – it did not offer any substantive discussion of the rehabilitation commissions. Magomedov and Kurbanov appear in the intellectual world of leaders, but in the context of their public statements against the insurgency, rather than that of the commission. This demonstrated a degree of sensitivity to their actions, but did not translate into substantive debate over their policies. Again, contestation over political processes is minimal. We can also see how, in the final phase, there is a sharp increase in potential grievances as political opportunities shrink, but these again are not reflected in diagnostic framing. We witness, over time, an insurgency that becomes increasingly divorced from the political life in the republic that it aspired to direct.

Interpreting the Ideology of the Dagestani Insurgency

Analysis of the ideology articulated by the Dagestani insurgency yields a number of important insights that inform our understanding of both the conflict in the republic and the nature of the regional insurgency. Perhaps most significantly, there is a local dimension to communiqués that exceeds expectations of regional variation. Dagestani insurgent groups operated under a single ideological umbrella, the regional insurgency is most often referred

to in the singular, and Dagestani actors were important to the ideological reorientation of the insurgency that was manifested in the proclamation of the IK. Yet the rebel leadership in the republic identified highly localized grievances and, particularly in the case of Suleymanov, often situated these within an exclusively Dagestani historical narrative. The intellectual world of the insurgency, too, was initially highly focused on individuals in Dagestan, particularly those associated with the security services and the grievances the leadership articulated. Interest in events and individuals in the broader region, much less beyond it, was exceptionally limited. Thus, analysis of the first phase supports Campana and Ducol's (2015:691) conclusion that "the way their fight is described remains mostly local." If anything, it pushes it a step further, in that the local is not merely North Caucasian, but confined within the boundaries of the republic.

Over time, we see a change in focus, but not truly in the direction of greater regionalization or internationalization, as seen in Umarov's statements (Youngman, 2019). In both the second and the third phase, we do see greater concern with events outside Dagestan, first with the leadership challenge to Umarov and then in responding to the Syrian crisis. But, in both cases, these are occasions where the outside world has come to Dagestan, and the insurgent leadership had little choice but to respond to them. Leaders did not really concern themselves with the situation on the ground in those external areas, and we see neither detailed discussion of grievances affecting other North Caucasians or Syrians, nor extensive references to actors operating in those areas. Rather, the change that we see is diagnoses and intellectual worlds become decoupled from the concerns of those not already involved in the insurgency. The decline of Dagestan-specific diagnostic and prognostic framing is not really replaced by anything, and even when the grounds for articulating grievances increase significantly, this is not reflected in leadership statements.

Leaders, particularly Asilderov, became increasingly concerned with their own affairs, and did not engage in the persuasive work required to respond to the challenges the insurgency was facing. Those challenges were extensive, yet the insurgency lacked the personnel to meet them. There was a decline in cadres, reflected in framing; it didn't cause the collapse of the insurgency, but it appears to have worked in tandem with other factors to contribute to it.

The characteristics of Suleymanov's statements also assume particular importance given that, by the third phase, he was one of the few IK leaders still communicating in detail. On the one hand, he articulated a relatively clear diagnosis and, although his prognostic framing was not particularly detailed – relying more on logical deduction from his diagnosis than anything else – one can find in his statements a reasonably clear ideology. On the other hand, his insurgent credentials were arguably damaged, and his communicative style limited his own appeal and therefore the salience of his messaging. He communicated mainly through an unattractive medium; he concentrated on the minutiae of jihadist scholarly debate rather than making them salient to his specific audience; and he focused on a Dagestani identity that limited his appeal to non-Dagestani actors. This becomes particularly relevant by the end, considering the intellectual and operational weakness of the IK in its other republics – a subject to which we will now turn.

Chapter Five

Kabardino-Balkaria

Introduction

In October 2005, approximately 200 rebels launched a raid on the Kabardino-Balkarian capital of Nalchik, attacking government and security service buildings throughout the city. The attack was claimed by Shamil Basayev and led by Caucasus Front Ingushetian Sector commander Ilyas Gorchkhanov and former Kabardino-Balkarian Jama'at (KBJ) leaders Musa Mukozhev and Anzor Astemirov. It was a seminal event in the history of the republic, catapulting it to the forefront of considerations of growing regional instability. It was the last time the regional insurgency demonstrated the ability to marshal triple figures behind a single attack. Moreover, Zhukov (2008) notes that, to the outside observer, Kabardino-Balkaria had hitherto been considered something of an “island of stability” in the region. Without much exaggeration, he argues that “the date 13 October 2005 for many in Kabardino-Balkaria forever divided life into ‘before’ and ‘after.’”

The attack, however, did have a “before,” and as Zhukov goes on to note in his comprehensive report on the lead-up to it, there were multiple events that offered signs of what was to come. These included violent incidents that traced back to the republic and the involvement of individuals from Kabardino-Balkaria in the Chechen conflict. Yet arguably more significant, both for the creation and post-attack evolution of the Kabardino-Balkarian insurgency, were the history of the KBJ and the large-scale migration of its members to an illegal underground. This shaped the composition of the leadership in the early years and

fed back into the trajectory of the regional insurgency. Kabardino-Balkaria also has religious and cultural dynamics quite distinct from those of Dagestan that shaped this evolution. In order to examine these dynamics and the specifics of the Kabardino-Balkarian insurgency, this chapter replicates the structure of the preceding chapter. As such, the first section examines the historical roots of the insurgency in the republic and the road leading to its incorporation into the IK. The second, third and fourth sections then look, respectively, at framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities, with each following the same broad temporal logic set out in chapter three. The final section will then offer preliminary conclusions about the nature of the Kabardino-Balkarian insurgency's ideology and how it interacted with internal and external factors.

The Evolution of Conflict in Kabardino-Balkaria

As was the case with the other republics of the North Caucasus, Kabardino-Balkaria experienced a post-Soviet religious revival attributable to a variety of factors, including the fashions of the time, deep religious convictions, and the rediscovery of religion as inherently linked to ethnic culture (Babich, 2008). There were both similarities and differences in the processes that took place in the republic compared to Dagestan. On the one hand, Islam's historical roots were much shallower in the Northwestern Caucasus when compared to the Northeastern parts (Babich, 2008; Khanbabaev, 2010). Cultural practices, moreover did not always demonstrate a deep understanding of "fundamental dogmas, principles and perceptions of the Islamic faith" (Babich, 2008:24), and the Islamic revival largely took a back seat to ethno-nationalism in the 1990s, only moving to the fore towards the end of the decade (Bram and Gammer, 2013). Even in this regard, ethnic tensions in the republic were lower than those found in Karachayevo-Cherkessia, North Ossetia,

Ingushetia and Chechnya (Lanzilloti, 2018). On the other hand, thereafter Islam's role in the personal and social life of the republic grew relatively rapidly (Akkiyeva, 2009). Moreover, many of the problems facing religious communities in Kabardino-Balkaria mirrored those seen elsewhere. The old religious establishment was both co-opted by the local authorities and displayed low levels of knowledge of the fundamentals of Islam, while newly qualified religious officials struggled to find work (Akkiyeva, 2009). A new generation of religious leaders who trained in the Middle East and were unaffiliated with these official structures emerged. These leaders and their supporters, who became known as the New Muslims and formed the KBJ, challenged what they considered to be the religious ignorance of the "official" establishment and called for people to embrace a "genuine" Islamic identity and morality, including adhering to Shari'ah law (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2011).

Central to this New Muslim movement were people like Musa Mukozhev and Anzor Astemirov. For a long time, both "systematically resisted pressures both from inside the movement and from its opponents, rejecting any extreme ways of expressing their beliefs" (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2011:305). Instead, Mukozhev explicitly rejected violence, calling for dialogue with both the authorities and the "official" religious structures (Sagramoso and Yemelianova, 2010). The KBJ networks were extensive, operating at the central, city and village, and local jama'at levels, with an estimated membership of several thousand (out of a total population of just over 850,000) and acceptance of a central emir and hierarchy a condition of membership (Zhukov, 2008). Despite its rhetorically conciliatory position, it found itself drawn into increasingly conflictual relations with the authorities (Zhukov, 2008). As relations deteriorated, the position of Mukhozhev and Astemirov vis-à-vis violence evolved, and both leaders went underground, participating

first in armed raids on government buildings and then in the October 2005 Nalchik attack (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2011).

Some authors, most notably Hahn (2007:154), have viewed the KBJ leadership's earlier disavowal of violence as dissimulation, allowing it to "provide an indigenous cadre base for militant Islamists' recruitment into combat jama'at's and function as their political arm." In support of this view, Hahn describes Mukozhev and Astemirov as students of "Dagestani Wahhabi" Akhtayev; cites official claims that hundreds of people from the republic had fought in Chechnya; and notes the emergence of a combat jama'at called Yarmuk. Adopting a highly Chechnya-centric perspective, he places insurgent violence in Kabardino-Balkaria in the context of the ChRI's strategy for expanding the conflict beyond Chechnya's boundaries. Yarmuk, which Astemirov led after going underground, is described as "a direct result of the Chechen war and ChRI financial support." Such a view, however, is simplistic in ignoring the internal dynamics within Kabardino-Balkaria. Hahn's own account notes the high levels of repression of religious communities in the republic, including a governmental decree that restricted mosque visits to Fridays and prayer times to 40 minutes. After the Nalchik attack, even the new Kabardino-Balkarian President, Arsen Kanokov, admitted that police crackdowns could have triggered the attack (The Moscow Times, 2007). Chechen-centric explanations that ignore local agency overlook the question of whether the behaviour of the local authorities was such that it was almost impossible to be a practising Muslim and avoid conflict with them. This is not to justify the recourse to violence, but to acknowledge the legitimacy of, at the very least, some form of resistance. As Shterin and Yarlykapov (2011:306) note, the shift of large sections of the KBJ to insurgent activity and the decision to engage in violence was

not an inevitable outcome of their adoption of a particular strand of Islam. [...]

Rather, their engagement in violence was an outcome of complex interactions between the internal dynamics of this movement and its relationship with certain agencies in the wider society.

Despite their popularity, both in discussions about the North Caucasus insurgency and broader debates about terrorism (Youngman, 2018), *post hoc ergo propter hoc* arguments ignore the decisions made, and the factors influencing them, in the interim. As Shterin and Yarlykapov (2011:304) note, there is a consistent failure “to present members of new Islamic groups as human agents who actually created these movements through their own choice and decision-making, and by dealing with the consequences of their own actions.”

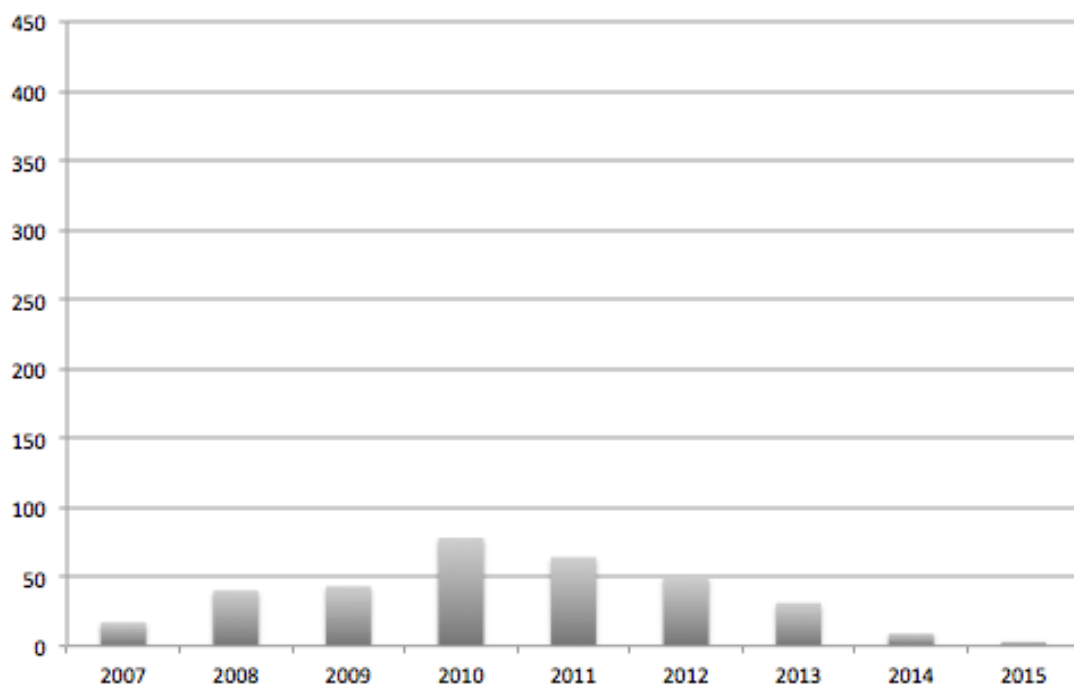


Figure 20. Security service losses in Kabardino-Balkaria by year (Memorial, 2016a).

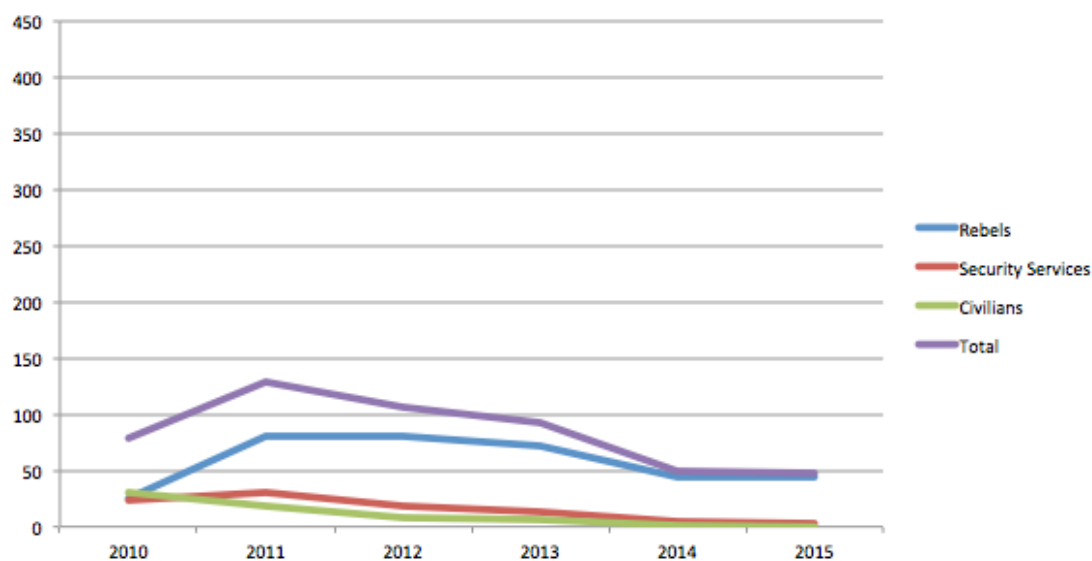


Figure 21. Numbers killed in Kabardino-Balkaria by actor category, 2010-2014 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011c, 2012b, 2013a, 2014c, 2015c, 2016c).

Framing

Phase One

Rejecting Democratic Systems and Values

Astemirov occupied the dual role of OVKBK emir and IK qadi and was widely recognized as one of the IK's leading ideologists. This is reflected in his comparatively prolific output of 20 statements and their content: Of all the IK's leaders, he articulated the clearest and most comprehensive vision of what the insurgency was fighting against. Two statements in particular addressed in detail the underlying systemic and structural issues that dictated the necessity of revolution, rather than reform: A November 2007 statement justifying the proclamation of the IK and a December 2009 statement answering questions directed to him as IK qadi. In both cases, there was an implicit regional audience and an attempt to articulate a *raison d'être* for the movement as a whole — demonstrating Astemirov's importance to the broader IK intellectual milieu. Central to his diagnosis was a

rejection of democratic systems and values as incompatible with the core tenets of Islam (Astemirov, 2007). Per Astemirov's reading, the supposed freedoms that democracy was supposed to guarantee were far from positive, because "the freedom of religious beliefs that the infidels call for is a freedom of unbelief," one that leads to a proliferation of sinful practices and social ills (Astemirov, 2007). As in Dagestani leadership statements, Astemirov highlighted what he considered problematic social practices, but he took the analysis a step further and drew a direct connection between them and the underlying system that permitted them. Inequality was inherent to the very "barbaric capitalist laws" that Russia adhered to (Astemirov, 2009e). Thus, we find in Astemirov's statements a rejection of the entire liberal democratic, capitalist model. Its precise manifestation in Russia, meanwhile, was so corrupted as to be irredeemable: Russia was cast as run by criminal groups, with a legal system that was unable to protect Russian citizens. Russia's laws were not merely "foolish, this is admitted by the Russians themselves," but also irrelevant, given the lack of an independent judiciary (Astemirov, 2009e). Astemirov's critique of the existing political system therefore moved between its inherent features and its practical manifestation to argue that, whichever angle you approached the subject from, it could not be saved by gradualist reform and anything short of its total replacement.

Intertwined with the legitimacy of any political system is the question of who has the right to rule. Astemirov sought to answer this question through reference to the theme of occupation. For example, he criticized the people of the North Caucasus for seeking to resurrect "pagan traditions" (Astemirov, 2008c) and for ignorance of "even the elementary foundations of their religion," but he placed primary blame for this on the "occupation" of the region (Astemirov, 2009e). Returning repeatedly to this theme, he claimed that Russia was unable "to effectively govern its colonies in the Caucasus" (Astemirov, 2008c).

Astemirov's use of anti-colonial framing contrasts with that of IK leader Umarov. Whereas Umarov deployed an anti-colonial narrative as part of a nationalist-separatist framing of the conflict that faded after he proclaimed the IK (Youngman, 2019), in Astemirov's communiqués the themes of occupation and religion were always intertwined. Both leaders, however, were united in portraying the local authorities as the means, rather than the agents of oppression, no more than "Kremlin puppets held up exclusively by Russian bayonets" (Astemirov, 2008c).

Astemirov reinforced his abstract and systemic criticisms with a grievance narrative that accused Russia of oppressing local Muslims. Russia's efforts to cast itself as a defender of Muslims – for example, by inviting Hamas leaders to Moscow and opposing the US-led war in Iraq – were themselves undermined by the realities of Russia's treatment of its own Muslims (Astemirov, 2007). Astemirov alleged that the closure of mosques in the republic was conducted on Moscow's orders, and accused it of seeking to co-opt local religious leaders. The local authorities, meanwhile, were preventing young people from learning about their religion and studying the Qur'an (Astemirov, 2009e). Astemirov thus related local developments with events on the national and international stage, crafting a coherent narrative that portrayed them as all parts of the same issue. He sought to provide examples from people's everyday lives that they could relate to – and drew on his own experience – and then placed those in a broader context of a war between Islam and non-believers in which Russia was a leading protagonist.

Shari'ah Justice and Reluctant Violence

Like insurgent leaders in Dagestan, Astemirov identified governance by Shari'ah law as the insurgency's ultimate goal. He was, however, unique in putting flesh on the bones

and explaining what Shari'ah law actually meant in practice. Drawing on his own pre-insurgency experience resolving problems within his jama'at (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2011), he claimed that “until 2004, we regularly judged cases according to the Shari'ah,” and “even policemen and lawyers” appealed to the jama'at's courts as the only path to justice, given corruption in the state legal system (Astemirov, 2009e). Astemirov claimed that the Shari'ah court system would, for example, find a just solution to the contentious issue of land reform — the third rail of Kabardino-Balkarian politics. However, he declined to offer this solution in the absence of independence, on the grounds that the IK could not ensure its implementation in conditions of occupation (Astemirov, 2009e). Separation from Russia, “the worst state in the world that we have to deal with” would, he claimed, lead to economic revitalization and prosperity (Astemirov, 2009a). Astemirov was thus unique in translating Shari'ah into something resembling policy.

Astemirov argued that it was important for insurgents to have a clear conceptualization of what they were fighting for:

After all, if our goal in war is to save the Chechen people from annihilation, then this goal has already been achieved. If our goal is to protect people from disbelief and deprive the infidel of power, then let everyone know this. Every mujahid should know what he is fighting for. Then the infidels' plan to destroy what they call the ‘ideological foundation’ or ‘religious motivation’ of jihad loses any meaning (Astemirov, 2007).

In a later statement, he reiterated this point, claiming that everyone “should know that it is not simply a battle for land or for some other resources. He should understand that it is a battle between monotheism and paganism” (Astemirov, 2009e). Embedded within these assertions, however, was an equally important point: that the insurgency should be clear what it was *not* fighting for, which included “human rights, international law, referendums,

freedom of speech and religious belief, the will of the people” (Astemirov, 2007). According to Astemirov, “among the mujahideen, only supporters of the Shari’ah remain.” The proclamation of the IK therefore amounted to a corrective to the course adopted by Dzhokhar Dudayev, who had adopted “the law of the taghut” in affording primacy to democracy in the 1992 Chechen constitution. Like Umarov (Youngman, 2019), Astemirov portrayed this as implementing the decisions of a 2002 Majlis Shura (consultative council) in determining the ideological direction of the insurgency. Indeed, Astemirov claimed that the initial subordination of Kabardino-Balkarian militants to the authority of ChRI leader Sadulayev was contingent on Ichkerian statehood being aligned with Shari’ah principles (Astemirov, 2007). He urged Muslims to reject nationalism (Astemirov, 2009e) and threatened those who would incite inter-ethnic hatred (Astemirov, 2008c).

In addressing the question of how these goals were to be achieved, Astemirov claimed Muslims faced a choice: “either complete degradation and disappearing into the slavery of the *giaour* [infidel], or a return to Islamic values and liberation from colonial dependence” (Astemirov, 2008c). A choice between damnation, destruction, or deliverance, as Astemirov portrayed it (Astemirov, 2010c), however, was no choice at all, and thus fostered the impression that violence was the only reasonable response. In Astemirov’s reading, jihad was not, in and of itself, more important than the other pillars of Islam, but in certain circumstances it assumed particular importance — and, of course, the given situation was one such occasion (Astemirov, 2008b). Individual acts of violence, however, were extensively justified and portrayed as a last resort. On one occasion, having extensively justified the applicability of the concept of defensive jihad, he argued that its purpose was disruptive rather than destructive:

Today partisan war is not the purposeless destruction of infidels and damage to

their property, but a deliberate strategy that does not allow the infidels to definitively become established on the ground and spread debauchery and corruption (Astemirov, 2008b).

On another occasion, he emphasized the restraint shown by insurgents:

We work according to a different programme, which does not stipulate military activity at the current stage. We do not practice excessive violence except when necessary. We do not see enemies in the local population. We prefer to turn people toward the true path rather than to kill them (Astemirov, 2009a).

In emphasizing his preference for “beginning with persuasion by word rather than by the gun” (Astemirov, 2009a), he arguably sought to constrain as much as encourage further violence. When violence was employed, he went to considerable lengths to portray its victims as deserving, as having reaped the rewards of their actions. The murders of individual security service employees, for example, were justified through reference to their involvement in operations against insurgents and allegations of them having tortured Muslims (Astemirov, 2008a, 2009c). Similar justifications were found in the communiqués issued by the general leadership at the same time (Kavkazcenter, 2009i; Islam Din, 2010). This was not indiscriminate violence against abstract categories; this was the deliberate targeting of those deemed to have crossed the threshold of acceptable behaviour. Astemirov displayed sensitivity to the question of civilian casualties. Justifying a specific incident, he insisted that insurgents tried to avoid casualties among civilians, apologizing to any who had suffered directly, as well as to those living in areas where operations were conducted (Astemirov, 2008a). Thus, even where victims were not directly targeted, they were portrayed as deserving of their fate. The general leadership, meanwhile, urged civilians to stay out of the forests to avoid becoming collateral damage (Islam Din, 2009b).

In Astemirov’s statements, we also find Umarov’s hierarchy of enemies replicated:

Russia was the main threat, while the local authorities were merely their stooges. Thus, he claimed the insurgency was not fighting to replace the Kabardino-Balkarian president, “because he does not decide anything independently here”; instead, “our main enemy is the Kremlin mafia” and “all strength needs to be directed at the fight with the main *taghut* — Russia” (Astemirov, 2009e). Although Astemirov demonstrated a far greater awareness than Umarov of events beyond Russia’s borders, he similarly treated the West as a source of disappointment rather than a target of hostility. He defended the proclamation of the IK on the grounds that the insurgency never had Western support to lose, and claimed that “playing at democracy almost led to the end of jihad in the Caucasus. We simply had nothing to say in response to rank-and-file mujahideen” (Astemirov, 2007). Astemirov’s statements demonstrated little affection towards the West, claiming that there was a global struggle between “disbelief and Islam,” and that the Chechen insurgency’s Western supporters had demanded it choose between the two. At the same time, he was clear that this global struggle did not translate into hostility directed at the West:

Even if we were to threaten America and Europe every day, anyone who understands politics knows we do not have a real clash of interests. The White House knows perfectly well that now we are not concerned with America (Astemirov, 2007).

In an interview with a journalist from US think-tank Jamestown Foundation, Astemirov even held out the possibility of an independent emirate building constructive trade and economic relations with non-Muslim states (Astemirov, 2009a). The non-identification of the West as an enemy, however, was also present in his statements directed at domestic audiences. Where Astemirov made explicit threats in his statements, these were directed at those accused of either working for the Russian and local authorities or acting as “provocateurs” (Astemirov, 2008c, 2009a). During his tenure, the general leadership also

threatened local spies and promised retaliation against both Slavs, for the deaths of local residents, and the security services, for punitive measures taken against the families of militants (Islam Din, 2009a, 2010). Yet these all remained locally oriented, rather than directed towards external actors.

Differentiating Among the Enemy

In one way, Astemirov's framing of identity conformed to the Manichean division of good versus evil, believer versus infidel. He claimed that the insurgents and supporters were exclusively supporters of Shari'ah (Astemirov, 2007), and that the insurgency commanded an audience among "most of the Muslims who perform prayers" in the republic. This implied a link between religious devotion and support for the insurgency, and Astemirov insisted that Muslims are one *umma*, one jama'at, which is "in a state of war with the infidels" (Astemirov, 2008b). Were it not for the insurgents, he claimed, "they would just come and take everything away from you"; the insurgents consequently were defenders of "the children of noble Muslims"; not only were they disinterested in personal gain, but "many of us sacrificed most of our property and invested it in the most profitable deal there is" (Astemirov, 2010a). On the other side of this divide were "the infidels and *munafigs*, who are driven by the goal of depriving us of the truth" (Astemirov, 2007). The insurgent leadership portrayed those who were killed as entirely deserving of their fate. One was described as a "maniac," a "sick sadist," and the "personification of impunity" (Astemirov, 2008a). Another was "such an egregious scumbag that even his colleagues in the criminal business unanimously say that he got what he deserved" (Kavkazcenter, 2008f). One communiqué described in detail how the security services had failed to come to the aid of a colleague when attacked (Kavkazcenter, 2008f). Astemirov reinforced this

binary by declaring that the proclamation of the IK amounted to an assertion of the supremacy of the principle of *al-wala wal-bara*, the concept of loyalty to Muslims and disavowal of non-Muslims that is deemed a central tenet of much jihadist ideologies like Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (Brachman, 2009; see also Wagemakers, 2009). As such, he had declared his loyalty to co-religionists in the world and opposition to the infidels fighting Islam (Astemirov, 2012). “Self defence” was, per Astemirov’s reading, “the holy duty of Muslims” (Astemirov, 2007), and, “in today’s situation, financial or any other types of support are no longer voluntary actions, but *fard al-ayn* for every true Muslims because we are at war” (Astemirov, 2009a). Astemirov claimed that fulfillment of one’s duty did not necessarily entail moving to the mountains, but providing support to the insurgency when it needed it and obeying the emirs. Only, however, when “enough people have been mobilized” would jihad become *fard al-kifaya* (Astemirov, 2012).

At the same time, the conceptualization of identity in leadership communiqués during Astemirov’s tenure allowed for considerably more nuance than that displayed by the Dagestani insurgent leadership. Thus, they referred to “Russian *giaors* and local traitors,” “Russian occupiers and their local accomplices,” and “Russian masters, local maniacs” (Kavkazcenter, 2008f). Whatever their features, these two categories were never collapsed into a singular identity, and the stories of treachery on the part of the infidel sought to emphasize this divide, portraying the federal authorities as willing to sell out their local partners as soon as it became expedient to do so (Astemirov, 2008a). There was, moreover, a willingness to contemplate the possibility of crossing boundaries, of the local ‘them’ becoming ‘us.’ Astemirov observed that insurgent attitudes towards the local authorities had changed over time: whereas, at first, “we naively supposed that they [local civil servants] are at war with Islam because they simply do not know the religion,” later they

“did not hide their hostile attitude towards monotheism” (Astemirov, 2009e). The local security services, meanwhile, were the “servants of a pagan cult, just like their masters”; while Astemirov was prepared to recognize that among their ranks “there are many who sympathize with Muslims,” he said it was necessary to judge them according to their behaviour. At the same time, Astemirov made it clear that the insurgents’ preference is for the locals who serve the infidel to repent, rather than to fight them:

We repeatedly warned the local residents, those who serve in the police and other similar structures, that if they do not want to quit their service, then they should at least restrict themselves to maintaining public order. We informed them that our main enemy is the Kremlin mafia, and we asked them not to impede our struggle (Astemirov, 2009e).

Astemirov also differed from Dagestani leaders in his handling of ethnic identity, both referencing specific local ethnic identities and relegating their importance relative to Islamic identity. Astemirov argued that “all Muslims are one people, one *Umma*, independent of language or nationality.” Membership of this *umma* therefore negated the possibility of serious conflict between the Circassians and the Balkars, and Islamic identity served as a means of overcoming ethnic divisions. Astemirov criticized nationalist celebrations — such as the 300-year anniversary of a battle between Circassian and Ottoman forces — arguing that “all Muslims are one family, and normal families do not celebrate the date when two brothers argued” (Astemirov, 2008c). He later insisted that there should be no barriers drawn between Muslims, and Muslims should not accept the borders drawn by infidels; while he characterized love for one’s native tongue and people as entirely natural, he claimed they should not be elevated to be on a par with religion or state ideology (Astemirov, 2009e). Islam served as a way of deemphasizing ethnic boundaries, with Kabardin and Balkar identities subordinated to the Muslim one; there was

no broader Kabardino-Balkaria identity that stands in contrast to a Russian one, only a Muslim one. At the same time, common “blood ties” could be drawn upon to reinforce that religious identity (Astemirov, 2008c).

Phase Two

A Hollowed-Out Diagnosis

Astemirov’s successors were much less prolific and articulate, with only Astemirov’s immediate successor, Asker Dzhappuyev (Abdullakh), offering much by way of detailed statements. These leaders largely neglected a broader systemic critique, and we see a hollowing out of existing frames and a failure to continue to articulate a reason for revolution rather than reform. Dzhappuyev justified an attack on a nightclub by portraying it as a den of iniquity, the destruction of which meant that husbands returned sober to their wives and paid attention to their families rather than prostitutes from outside the republic. In the same statement, he also offered a scathing characterization of the Russian authorities:

You do not have any ideology. You do not have any principles. You do not have any goals, except, inshallah, the goal of profiteering, of deceiving people – and that again for profit (Dzhappuyev, 2010c).

Yet, for the most part, a clear identification of what was wrong with society was left unspecified. We see a shallower diagnosis and criticisms of existing social mores that hint at more fundamental problems, but these were somewhat dependent on existing broader narratives and explanations. The hollowing out of the diagnostic element of the Kabardino-Balkarian insurgency’s ideology only accelerated under his successors, none of whom specified any broader underlying problems.

Occupation, too, featured sporadically, rather than being developed into a major theme

— reflecting the broader neglect of the bigger picture. The general OVKBK leadership, for example, referred to a claim by the “occupying command” about how many insurgents were still operating in the republic (Kavkazcenter, 2010i). It later claimed that the insurgency was fighting against “the polytheists and tyrants who are occupying our land and forbidding us from living according to the commands of the Creator” (Islam Din, 2013). This, however, was the sole explicit reference to occupation in the post-Dzhappuyev Kabardino-Balkarian insurgency. Even the grievance narrative was significantly weakened after Astemirov’s death. Dzhappuyev focused on accusing the authorities of targeting the families of rebel commanders, and of deceiving people so as to extract “the last kopecks from pensioners” (Dzhappuyev, 2010c). Alim Zankishiyev argued that the *umma* was everywhere being tested (Zankishiyev, 2011). These explanations of what needed to change, however, were underdeveloped and offered only in passing.

Losing Direction and Control

Post-Astemirov, the aim of establishing Shari’ah governance persisted, but it became as threadbare as that offered in Dagestan. Dzhappuyev spoke of returning people to Islam’s true path and elevating the word of Allah above all else, and claimed that jihad would continue until this had been achieved (Dzhappuyev, 2010a, 2010c). The sophistication of the vision found in Astemirov’s statements, however, became a thing of the past. Alim Zankishiyev spoke vaguely of fighting to elevate Allah’s word “above all else,” and he insisted that “our very first task is inshallah to get out of this situation” (Zankishiyev, 2011), but he struggled to articulate coherent sentences, much less goals. Astemir Berkhamov spoke in almost identical terms of elevating the word of Allah until it and justice reigned supreme (Berkhamov, 2014).

One clear line of continuity between Astemirov's and Dzhappuyev's statements lay in the extensive justification of individual attacks and incidents and of the insurgency's choice of targets. Much like his predecessor, Dzhappuyev sought to portray violence as discriminate, rather than gratuitous or arbitrary. He too portrayed individual attacks as strategic and aimed not at capturing and holding territory, but at undermining the authorities' own claims of control. He described, for example, a major attack on a power plant in Baksan as "purely ideological," intended to demonstrate that the security services "cannot control even strategically important facilities, as they understand them" (Dzhappuyev, 2010c). He also demonstrated ongoing concern over the question of civilian casualties, referencing local media coverage of the topic and claiming that many attacks had either been changed or cancelled so as to avoid civilian casualties (Dzhappuyev, 2010a). He explained extensively that insurgent operations were directed only against "those who fight against us with weapons in hand," with civilian casualties a regrettable side effect (Dzhappuyev, 2010c). Even then, he clearly differentiated between local and federal security services, claiming, for example, that the insurgency's response to an attack on the relatives of insurgents would be determined by which group had perpetrated it. The inference was that the insurgents did not want to target local law enforcement to avoid an escalation of violence, an impression reinforced by the Qur'anic injunction to "fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress." Blame for the escalating violence was placed with the security services, and Dzhappuyev called on them to cease provocative actions that would "simply untie our hands" (Dzhappuyev, 2010c). The general leadership similarly urged the population to be wary of provocations, warning that the security services could target civilians to destabilize the situation (Kavkazcenter, 2010i). When local security services were targeted, Dzhappuyev explained this through the role they

supposedly played in identifying insurgents and targeting their families (Dzhappuyev, 2010d). Dzhappuyev, like Astemirov, therefore portrayed violence as visited only upon those who deserved it and stemming directly from the decisions they had taken. If civilians did not want to become its victims, they should stay away from security service personnel (Dzhappuyev, 2010a, 2010b); if the local security services and their informants wanted to live, they should adopt Islam and join the insurgency — otherwise, they would “all the same die like dogs” (Dzhappuyev, 2010a). The key distinction between the justifications for violence offered by Astemirov and by Dzhappuyev lay not so much in a loosening of the constraints around it, so much as in an escalation of violence despite those constraints — meaning there was much more violence to justify. After Dzhappuyev’s death, discussions of violence became increasingly abstract, with detailed explanations of specific attacks and justifications for civilian casualties largely disappearing from communiqués. Even the “martyrs” were, for the most part, nameless. Direct threats likewise became increasingly rare: the sole explicit threat came in a November 2011 Zankishiyev statement, when he threatened that “all infidels, all munafiqs, all who inshallah oppose our religion” would be killed one-by-one (Zankishiyev, 2011).

Maintaining Distinctions

The virtues of the insurgents and the deficiencies of their opponents remained important features of leadership communiqués. In contrast to the bravery of the mujahideen, a recurring theme was that of cowardice and avarice among the infidel, portraying senior officials as hiding behind their subordinates and all of them as ready to sell out their accomplices at a moment’s notice. Perfidiousness was, according to Dzhappuyev, “in principle inherent everywhere and at all times to the infidels”

(Dzhappuyev, 2010c). Leadership losses, by contrast, were evidence of how emirs had led the line, setting an example for others rather than hiding behind their subordinates as the infidel were inclined to do. Fakov claimed that fallen martyrs wanted nothing more than to return to earth so that they could be martyred again (Fakov, 2013).

At the same time, amid the escalating violence, Dzhappuyev's statements point to an effort to constrain this escalation by maintaining the distinction between federal and local security services. Thus, in response to attacks on the homes of relatives of insurgent leaders, he claimed that the insurgency presumed it to be the work of a "third party" seeking to aggravate the situation in the republic. However, he warned: "if it turns out not to be a third party of some sort, not deployed forces of some sort, but locals, local murtads and infidels did this, then we inshallah will also take adequate measures and act with them as they are acting with our brothers and sisters" (Dzhappuyev, 2010c). Dzhappuyev's statements consequently recognized that the insurgents and local security services come from the same communities and share a vulnerability, and therefore could be on the same side in a way that is not possible of those who comprise the federal forces. Under subsequent leaders, as with other dimensions, the explanations of violence diminish as such violence becomes increasingly security service- rather than insurgent-led.

Phase Three

Remedying Unspecified Problems

Only under the leadership of Zelim Shebzukhov (Salim), the last and second-longest serving OVKBK emir, did the insurgency experience something of a communicative resurgence, but even then statements were extremely short in length when compared with the output of Astemirov and Dzhappuyev. He offered little by way of explanation of what

the insurgency was fighting against. He compared jihad to being “like waking up,” making one understand “the causes of the problems and misfortunes which befall the Islamic community” (Shebzukhov, 2015a). What these problems were, however, went unspecified. Shebzukhov made passing references to the “ugliness and the hypocritical lies of infidels and disbelief” (Shebzukhov, 2015b) and accused the authorities of using “the services of witches and clairvoyants” against the insurgency (Shebzukhov, 2015a). Beyond this, however, there was no articulation of the problems facing either the insurgency or the republic. It was left to the audience to work out for themselves what, exactly, the insurgency was fighting against.

Advancing Unclear Goals

On the question of goals, these again were largely absent from communiqués. Zalim Shebzukhov called on people “to strive for the establishment of an ideal Islamic society” (Shebzukhov, 2015b). Yet what this ideal would look like was left unspecified, and such vague calls amounted to the sum total of their ambition. If the insurgency had clear goals, then they were again left to the audience’s imagination. Justifications for violence, too, were negligible — in no small part because, by this point, there was very little insurgency-initiated violence to justify.

If Nothing Else, Pray

Once again, those who had died on the path of jihad were those who had fulfilled their obligations before Allah (Shebzukhov, 2014b). We can also see the persistence of the possibility of crossing the divide between infidel and believer. Shebzukhov claimed: “if our enemies accept Islam, they become our brothers. If they stay Islam’s enemy, we will pay them double” (Shebzukhov, 2015a). Arguably the most significant change in motivational

framing came with the increased emphasis placed on support of a more spiritual nature. In particular, Shebzukhov repeatedly called on people to pray for the insurgents. His calls displayed a degree of frustration at the lack of support, simultaneously praising those who had joined the insurgency and criticizing those who had not:

While you are a professional businessman, plumber, driver, etc. and you dedicate one hour a month to thinking about the ways to benefit God's religion and to exalt His word, our profession is to be mujahideen for God's cause and, figuratively speaking, we dedicate 24 hours a day to thinking about ways to best exalt God's world and benefit Islam (Shebzukhov, 2014a).

Later, Shebzukhov called on people to cultivate virtuous qualities in themselves and “be lenient with believers and steadfast with unbelievers” — again implicitly evoking the concept of *al-wala wal-bara* in support of this call for self-improvement (Shebzukhov, 2015a). The invocation of identity and calls for spiritual support, divorced from an emphasis on actually joining the insurgency, appeared to serve as a means of encouraging involvement in a period where insurgent activity itself was sporadic at best.

Mobilizing Structures

Phase One: Social Ties and Complex Roots

Astemirov was born in 1976 in Kremenchuk, Ukraine, his grandfather having moved there in the 1930s for fear that his family would be repressed for their noble Kabardin heritage (Dunkel, 2007). The family returned to Kabardino-Balkaria in the 1980s, moving first to Tyrnyauz and later to Nalchik (Dunkel, 2007). In the early 1990s, Astemirov travelled to Saudi Arabia, studying at the Imam Muhammad bin Saud University, before returning to Nalchik to preach at a local mosque (Yarlykapov, 2010). He helped found the

Islamic Centre of Kabardino-Balkaria, which provided the foundation for the KBJ, “the most serious force in opposition to the official Muslim spiritual board” (Yarlykapov, 2010:144). Between 1999 and 2001, he was arrested on suspicion of involvement in various criminal acts, and police detained him and Mukozhev in Stavropol in March 2001 on suspicion of involvement in terrorist attacks (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2006a; Yarlykapov, 2010). Astemirov participated in academic conferences in Moscow in 2003 and 2004, and he continued to be involved in the life of the KBJ. However, he was placed on the wanted list for involvement in a December 2004 attack on the facilities of the federal anti-narcotics agency, in which a large number of weapons were stolen (Dunkel, 2007). He subsequently reappeared in public as an insurgent leader, being appointed Caucasus Front commander for Kabardino-Balkaria in May 2005 and subsequently OVKBK emir and IK qadi.

Astemirov, consequently, was one of the insurgency’s best-known and recognizable figures, having enjoyed a prominent profile before joining the insurgency. Within the IK, he claimed a key role in the very proclamation of the IK. He also featured prominently in OVKBK and broader IK propaganda, playing a key role in shaping meanings around the conflict; indeed, some of his statements were only released posthumously, while others were permanently showcased or regularly reposted on “official” websites. As such, his ideological positioning of the movement resonated well beyond his death in a special operation in March 2010. His background and his theological training and ability to engage in sophisticated religious debates afforded him considerable social and educational capital. In advancing his vision of how the world is and how it should be as an IK leader, he was clearly comfortable with religious debate, moving between citations and interpretations in a manner that was distinct from the formulaic utterances of many other IK leaders. Elements of his personal experience were also clearly evident in the arguments that he deployed. As a

leader of the KBJ, for example, he had publicly debated the introduction of Shari'ah law and resolved all internal legal disputes through the jama'at's own Shari'ah court system (Shterin and Yarlykapov, 2011). He could therefore draw on his personal experience and authority in discussing the possible introduction of Shari'ah law, helping explain why he was able to address it as a practical rather than abstract matter. More subtly, but equally significantly, we can see his background reflected in his attitude to violence. Shterin and Yarlykapov (2011:321) argue for viewing Astemirov's leadership of the KBJ and the OVKBK as "two related but separate stories." In their view, the KBJ was integrated into society "despite a degree of separation," whereas the OVKBK was "bent on destroying the dominant social institutions and implementing an extreme Islamist vision." Their argument is, broadly speaking, accurate, emphasizing the importance of context, agency, and social relationships. Arguably, however, it misses an important feature of the rhetoric the OVKBK articulated in its early years, namely that of constraint. The leadership did advocate destroying social institutions but, unlike Jama'at Shari'at, it displayed concern with those who might be harmed in the process. This was reflected in violence itself: as one interviewee noted, violence was highly selective, targeting those individuals deemed personally responsible for human rights violations and attempting "somehow to observe some kind of unwritten rules for waging this war" (Interview LW201702001). In other words, we arguably see in the limitations placed on violence, the extensive justification of its deployment, and its actual practice the persistence of concerns for local society and legitimacy within it. This dimension should not be overplayed – the OVKBK was still engaged in violent illegal activity, after all – but nor should it be ignored.

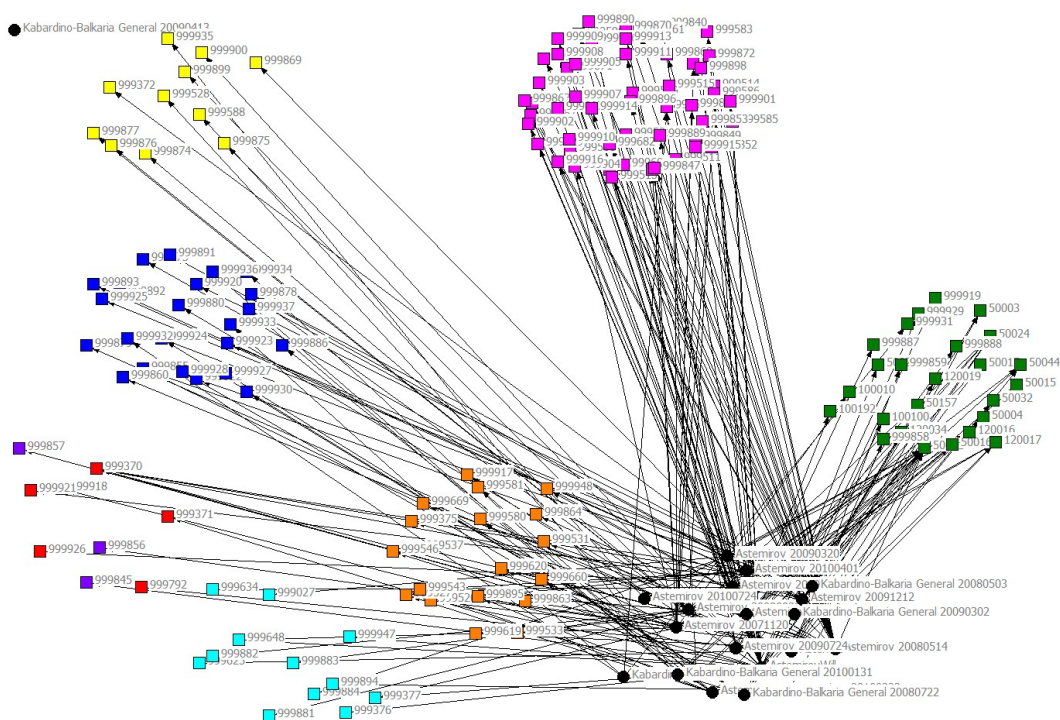


Figure 22. *The intellectual world of Kabardino-Balkarian leaders – Phase one. Green = insurgent actors, blue = Kabardino-Balkarian, red = Russian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly, yellow = historical, turquoise = regional, purple = global. Black nodes are the communiqués.*

Astemirov's intellectual qualities are also strongly reflected in the leadership's intellectual world during this phase. Statements referenced 155 individuals, with an average of 7.38 per communiqué – far higher than for any phase of the Dagestani insurgency. There was, moreover, a diverse representation across and within categories. Historical figures, for example, ranged from Imam Shamil and Joseph Stalin to Napoleon and Thomas Aquinas. Indicative of Astemirov's role as a central IK leader, we can also see a broad regional spread. Within the insurgency, he discussed a number of Chechen insurgent leaders, including Umarov and his aide Supyan Abdullayev, Basayev, and leader of the foreign fighters Mukhannad, as well as historically significant members like former ChRI leaders Dzhokhar Dudayev, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, Aslan Maskhadov, and Abdul-Khalim Sadulayev. Many of these figures were referenced in discussions of the debates around the proclamation of the IK, attempting to construct a narrative of historical continuity with the

decisions that these leaders made and emphasizing Astemirov's own role in shaping the debates. Insurgent leaders within Dagestan and Ingushetia, however, barely featured. Reference is made to Ilyas Gorchkhanov, a co-leader of the 2005 Nalchik raid, and Abu Umar as-Sayf, another foreign fighter leader killed in Dagestan in 2005. The only contemporary insurgent figures in these two republics to feature were fellow prominent ideologist Aleksandr Tikhomirov and someone by the name of Abu Usama al-Ingushi, with whom Astemirov corresponded. The remaining insurgency references were to various individuals operating within Kabardino-Balkaria itself. These included various emirs within the movement and Astemirov's deputy, Valeriy Etezov, whom he identified as key to intra-insurgency coordination and whose death prompted Astemirov to record his own testament (Astemirov, 2012). Thus we can see that Astemirov sought to shape the overall ideological direction of the insurgency, but did not engage with more granular intra-insurgency affairs in the other parts of the movement.

Insurgent leadership references to non-insurgent actors outside the republic similarly reveal their intellectual breadth and localized focus. Several individuals in Abkhazia are mentioned, most notably Astemirov's relative and former Abkhazian Defence Minister Sultan Sosnaliyev, whom Astemirov eulogized and claimed secretly supported the insurgency (Astemirov, 2009a, 2009b). Other references focused on Moscow's alleged interference in Abkhazian internal affairs, leveraged as a means of discrediting the Union of Abkhaz Volunteers as a co-opted nationalist movement and pro-Kremlin structure (Astemirov, 2008c). Yet all these references cover the broader Circassian world to which the Kabardins belong — and as such, their externality depends on which identity boundaries one uses to define the local. The only other regional figures to appear are

Akhmed Zakayev, in the context of Astemirov ordering his death¹⁸ (Astemirov, 2009d), and Stavropol and Vladikavkaz Bishop Feofan, whom Astemirov accuses of collecting tribute from Muslims in the republic (Astemirov, 2010a). There is no engagement with political actors in the other republics. Similarly, only five Russian actors feature: Putin, Medvedev, Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev, then FSB Director Nikolay Patrushev, and a senior Interior Minister official. Of these, Putin is unique in appearing multiple times, usually in the context of being the ultimate authority to which local puppet leaders swear fealty. The others are restricted to single references, mostly in the context of their official visits to Kabardino-Balkaria. Thus, while we can speak of a broader network when compared to Dagestan, the focus of communiqués, as far as individuals are concerned, remains distinctly local.

It is arguably in the intellectual sphere and the engagement with global Salafi and jihadist ideas that we see the most significant diversity in the leadership's intellectual world, with 55 different scholars referenced. These included hadith compilers and major historical scholars of Islam, several prominent historical and contemporary jihadist scholars, and opponents of jihadist interpretations, such as Saudi Grand Mufti Ibn Baz. The breadth of these networks illustrates Astemirov's engagements with debates over the legitimacy of jihad and his willingness to engage in detailed discussion of interpretations of scripture. Moreover, notable among his communiqués was direct correspondence with Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, asking for his verdict on the permissibility of accepting help from sympathizers among security service and state employees (Astemirov, 2010b).

¹⁸ Zakayev, who held political asylum in the UK, assumed leadership of the ChRI in exile after Umarov proclaimed the IK.

Phase Two: Leadership by Default

The second phase was marked by greater instability in the leadership. The five leaders within the phase – Asker Dzhappuyev (Abdullakh), killed April 2011; Alim Zankishiyev (Ubeyda), killed March 2012; Timur Tatchayev (Khamza), killed June 2012; Ruslan Batyrbekov (Khamzat), killed September 2012; and Khasanbi Fakov (Abu Khasan), killed August 2013 – all formed part of the leadership networks around Astemirov. Dzhappuyev, for example, had featured in communiqués alongside Astemirov (Astemirov, 2008a) and served as his deputy (Dzhappuyev, 2010a). His claim to leadership was strengthened by Etezov's death, and there did not appear to be any contention over the claim. Comparatively little, however, is known about the biographies of these leaders. Dzhappuyev was born in 1971 and, according to local journalist Islam Tekushev, a Balkar from Prielbrusskiy Rayon; post-Astemirov, Tekushev claimed the core of the insurgency was comprised of people from the republic's mountainous areas (Sharyy, 2011). Zankishiyev was born in 1982 in Verkhnyaya Zhemtala, Cherekskiy Rayon – another mountainous district – and was placed on the wanted list in 2006 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012a). Prior to assuming the overall leadership, he headed the OVKBK's Central Sector. Tatchayev was a resident of Nalchik who was accused of supporting the 2005 Nalchik attack, and previously headed the Southeastern/Urvanskiy Sector (Kommersant, 2012e). Batyrbekov was born in 1980 and formerly headed the Northwestern/Elbrusskiy Sector (Islam Din, 2012a). Finally, Fakov was born in 1979 in Baksanskiy Rayon and was on the federal wanted list from 2012 (Kommersant, 2013c). According to Islam Din's eulogy, he was a student of Astemirov's, going on to head the Southwestern/Chegemskiy Sector (Kavkazcenter, 2013a). Beyond these sparse details, however, there is very little information available on the pre-insurgency life or route into the insurgency of these

individuals.

Communicatively, these leaders were also much more constrained than Astemirov, placing much less emphasis on shaping meanings around the conflict. Only Dzhappuyev issued statements of any length, with seven communiqués encompassing almost two hours of video and two textual statements. Zankishiyev, by contrast, issued only one statement, Tatchayev and Batyrbekov did not issue any, and Fakov issued three – all considerably shorter than Dzhappuyev’s. There is a strong degree to which we can talk of attrition within the original network leading to a form of leadership by default, whereby lower-ranking commanders automatically assumed the senior-most positions as those above them were killed. That the post-Dzhappuyev leadership all headed different sectors – compared to Dagestan, where leaders often emerged from the same groups, frequently having previously served as their predecessor’s deputy – points to less coherent transition process. A major security service operation in April 2011 resulted in the deaths of multiple members of the OVKBK leadership, and by September of the following year, all those appointed as their replacements had been killed (Kommersant, 2011b), often with several killed in the same operation. The attrition levels were such that Islam Din criticized insurgents for failing to observe basic security procedures, complaining that they “become martyrs so frequently that they practically fail to communicate any military traditions, skills or experience to the younger generation” (Islam Din, 2011).

This deterioration in cadres manifested itself in both the apparent impact of leadership framing and its overall quality. Dzhappuyev appeared to lack Astemirov’s authority within the movement – he could claim combat experience, but there is no evidence of him possessing a comparable theological background. Although his tone was generally more threatening than Astemirov’s, he nevertheless articulated framing that

sought to constrain violence. Despite this, there was a significant increase in violence during his tenure. Although this cannot be attributed solely to the insurgency – the security services were a major factor in the escalation – Astemirov was influential enough to hold back violence in a manner that does not appear to be true of Dzhappuyev. One interviewee argued that, under Astemirov, violence may have been restrained as part of a strategy to avoid provoking a retaliatory response from the security services (Interview LW201702001) – one of several forms of “internal brakes” that movements can employ to constrain their own violence (Busher, Holbrook and Macklin, 2018). The post-Astemirov leadership, by contrast, may have changed its strategy, to escalate violence in order to provoke increased repression and win new recruits — both because it lacked the vision to understand the impact this would have on its support, and because it was more reliant on money extracted under threat from local businesses (Interview LW201702001). While this is certainly plausible, it is equally possible — given the vestiges of restraint in Dzhappuyev’s statements — that the security services were already escalating violence, rendering concerns about retaliation irrelevant, and the rebel leadership was incapable of controlling that escalation. These explanations are not mutually exclusive, and neither testifies to strong and skillful leadership. Subsequently, Zankishiyev was barely articulate, and Fakov was reportedly removed from his role as Southwestern emir in 2012 due to allegations of passivity (Kommersant, 2012c) — nevertheless assuming the overall leadership as one of the last men standing. My interviewee claimed that “the level of education, the level of intellect, the level of education that they had, all of them, with each generation [of leaders] got worse and worse” (Interview LW201702001). The substance of the ideology that they articulated certainly bears out this assertion.

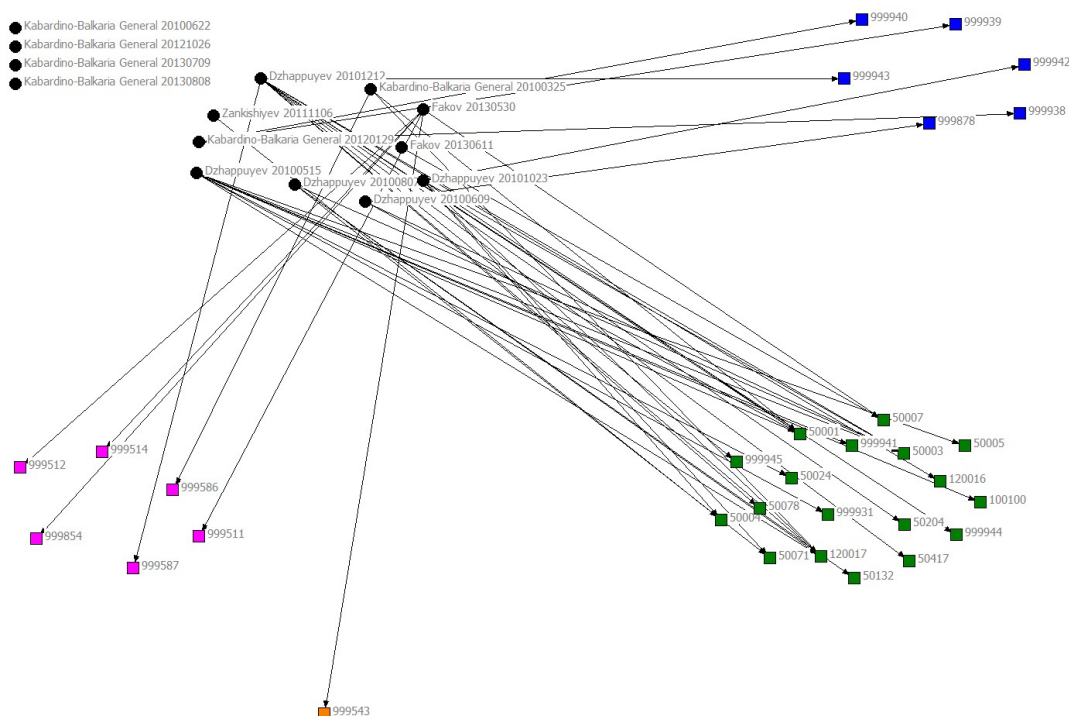


Figure 23. The intellectual world of Kabardino-Balkarian leaders – Phase two. Green = insurgent actors, blue = Kabardino-Balkarian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly. Black nodes are the communiqués.

The deterioration of the OVKBK networks in the second phase is further illustrated by the radical contraction of their intellectual world. The total number of individuals referenced plummeted to 32, an average of 2.21 per communiqué. No regional, Russian, global or historical actors featured at all in the network. Qur'anic and scholarly references similarly declined dramatically, with Moses the only Qur'anic figure, and Ibn Taymiyyah the only one of six scholarly references who wasn't a hadith compiler or founder of a school of Islamic jurisprudence. Nor were intra-insurgent references broad: only Basayev, Umarov and Tikhomirov outside of the republic featured, and many of those inside the republic were referenced in the context of their deaths, reflecting the high levels of attrition at the senior- and sector-level. Further illustrative of the focus on the here and now, those references to non-insurgent leaders in the republic focused on civilian casualties and explaining certain killings of people accused of operating as informers for the security

services. By contrast, the only member of the authorities or security services directly referenced was President Kanokov.

Phase Three: Losing Touch With the Outside World

In the early part of phase three, leadership instability continued, with both Tengiz Guketlov and Astemir Berkhamov (Al Bara) enjoying short tenures. Guketlov was born in 1983 in Kenzhe, a suburb of Nalchik; he had previously acted as Northeastern Sector emir, and was killed in March 2014 (Interior Ministry for Kabardino-Balkaria, 2014; Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2014b; Kommersant, 2014a). Berkhamov, a resident of Baksan, where he was killed in May 2014, similarly headed the Northeastern Sector (Kommersant, 2014b). Beyond these sparse details, we once again lack detailed information on those who occupied the senior leadership roles in the republic. Between them they issued only one communiqué that was included in the analysis, leaving little by way of framing to analyse.

With Berkhamov's death, the OVKBK leadership transitioned to Zelim Shebzukhov (Salim) and entered a period of relative stability. A Kabardin born in 1986 in Nalchik, he was wounded in a clash with security services in December 2007 when they tried to arrest him for illegal arms trafficking; he was held in detention for two and a half years, before a jury acquitted him (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2016b). In 2011, a Nalchik court ruled partially in his favour in a subsequent lawsuit, awarding him 2.5 million roubles in compensation (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2016b). He reportedly joined the insurgency in 2014 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2015b). Precisely when he assumed the leadership following Berkhamov's death is unclear: An August 2014 communiqué referred to him as Central Sector emir, even though it seems likely that he had assumed overall leadership of the OVKBK by then. This highlights one of the challenges of precisely dating communiqués, and therefore changes in ideological

positioning. Regardless, he went on to become the OVKBK's second-longest serving leader, surviving beyond the period of study until he was killed in a special operation in St Petersburg in August 2016.

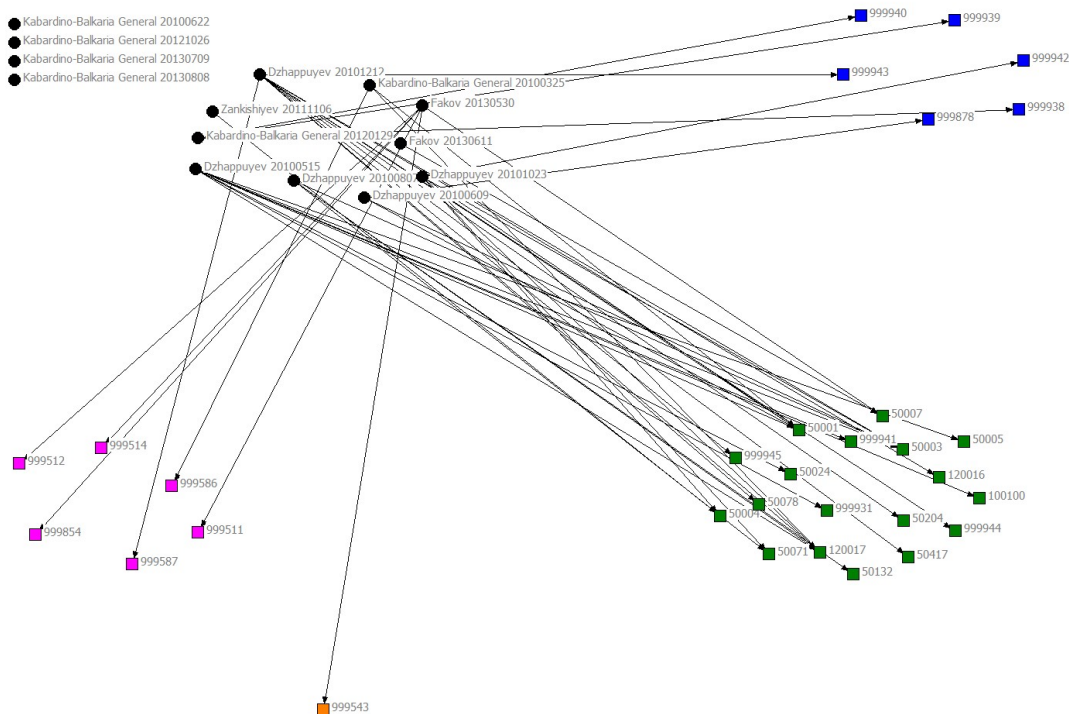


Figure 24. The intellectual world of Kabardino-Balkarian leaders – Phase three. Green = insurgent actors, blue = Kabardino-Balkarian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly. Black nodes are the communiqués.

What examining the insurgency's intellectual world shows us is that, despite a relative communicative rebirth, the contraction of the leadership's horizons continued. We see only 12 individuals referenced, an average of two per communiqué. Again, these did not include any regional, Russian, or historical actors, and the only global reference was to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi — responding to the splintering of the insurgency as a whole. References to insurgents are limited to Umarov and Kebekov, a reflection of the leadership changes at the top of the IK, and the insurgent leaders themselves. Qur'anic references increase to encompass several companions of the Prophet, reflecting Shebzukhov's greater scholarly focus. Perhaps most interestingly, references to non-insurgent actors within the republic

also disappear entirely, reinforcing the perception that emerges from diagnostic framing that discussions about jihad were entirely in the abstract, divorced from any events on the ground.

Political Opportunities

Phase One: “Enlightened Authoritarianism”

Throughout the early years of the IK’s existence, the repercussions of the Nalchik attack continued to reverberate through the republic, and significantly shaped perceptions of political opportunities. In particular, the trial of the alleged surviving participants received extensive local media coverage for many years afterwards. As such, any evaluation of political opportunities from 2007 onwards needs to acknowledge the seminal importance of the attack, both because it arguably shaped every aspect of political life in the republic and because repression had already peaked. Furthermore, in discussing the political opportunities available to human rights actors in particular, it is important to recognize that the indigenous human rights community in Kabardino-Balkaria was relatively small compared to that of Dagestan. Indeed, one interviewee observed that a defined community only really emerged as a result of the mass rights violations that occurred in the aftermath of the Nalchik attack; prior to that only isolated individuals dealt with human rights issues, and victims often defended themselves. The interviewee compared that emergence to the response of an immune system to an illness (Interview LW201702001). The perception of opportunities is heavily influenced by the relations between the authorities and one man: Valeriy Khatazhukov, head of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republican Human Rights Centre, a regional branch of the all-Russia movement For Human Rights. Although other actors are considered, particularly from 2012 onwards,

Khatazhukov to a large degree personified the local human rights community.

In 2007, the authorities continued a post-Nalchik attack policy that Khatazhukov labelled “enlightened authoritarianism” (Gazeta Yuga, 2007), which consisted of learning some of the lessons of the attack, mitigating its impact, and avoiding heavy-handed security service tactics, but also of keeping tight control of the political sphere. In November, Nalchik hosted the forum “For Public Concord and the Dynamic Development of KBR,” attended by Kanokov and Khatazhukov, at which the latter made these comments. The event was illustrative of a trend evident throughout the year by which human rights activists were given a platform to raise concerns in the presence of officials. As was the case in Dagestan, however, this largely consisted of ad hoc initiatives and did not translate into evidence of an ability to influence policy through structured or institutionalized mechanisms. Moreover, Kanokov and Khatazhukov voiced distinctly different understandings of the situation in the republic, with Kanokov claiming there were 500-700 supporters of radical Islam in the republic and Khatazhukov insisting many were guilty of nothing more than practicing their faith. Illustrating the ambiguity of combining enlightenment and authoritarianism, Khatazhukov reported that the security services were gathering mosque-goers’ biographical and DNA data, but not engaging in violence against them (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2007b).

Throughout 2008 and 2009, authoritarianism appeared to overtake enlightenment, albeit within limits. In particular, Larissa Dorogova, a human rights activist and lawyer for those accused of involvement in the Nalchik attack, found herself the target of sustained pressure. In March 2008, the Prosecutor’s Office Investigations Committee reportedly considered opening a criminal case against her for allegedly verbally abusing a detention centre employee when she was denied access to a client (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008d). The

same month, she received a letter containing a Kalashnikov cartridge and a written threat; although allegedly from the insurgency, Dorogova linked it to her work on the Nalchik attack case (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008f). In April, the president of the Kabardino-Balkarian Lawyers' Chamber instigated disciplinary proceedings against Dorogova, seeking to deprive her of the status of a lawyer. The proceedings cited information originating from the Prosecutor's Office, alleging Dorogova had met a client without the requisite official approval (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008g). The proceedings were terminated in June when the government department that had filed the complaint against her decided to withdraw it (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008k). In May, Dorogova appealed to Kanokov asking for protection for her and her son from persecution, claiming it was pointless appealing to the Prosecutor's Office given that they were one of the actors engaged in that persecution (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008h). The Kabardino-Balkarian human rights ombudsman, Boris Zumakulov, criticized the appeal for failing to provide adequate evidence, and advised Dorogova to appeal to the courts (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008j).

At the same time, opportunities for positive engagement between human rights actors and the authorities became more limited. In June 2008, the Belgian and Dutch ambassadors met with the republican leadership, human rights activists, and the relatives of those accused with involvement in the Nalchik attack (Gazeta Yuga, 2008a). In December 2009, Kabardino-Balkaria formed its own Public Chamber, with Khatazhukov among its members (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009j). Yet these were relatively isolated examples of positive engagement. There were also a number of missed opportunities. In August 2008, the Republican Human Rights Centre organized a roundtable devoted to the role of local media in tackling corruption. No one attended from state media or the Ministry of Culture and Information Communications, which Khatazhukov interpreted as meaning the topic was

off-limits for the state (Gazeta Yuga, 2008b). In March 2009, the Russian Public Chamber published a list of civil society monitors of detention centres. No human rights activists from Kabardino-Balkaria were included, despite having been encouraged to apply after missing the initial deadline by the chamber's chairman (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009e). Even the limited opportunities to influence official decision-making of 2007 had largely evaporated by 2008-2009. Interactions between the authorities and non-state actors may not have been as antagonistic as those seen in Dagestan at this time, but nor did the authorities offer clear channels for dissenting voices to influence political decision making in the republic.

Phase Two: Frustrated Liberalization

Reflecting the changes at the federal centre, in the early part of the phase Kabardino-Balkaria displayed signs of relative liberalization, manifested in an increasing number of events attended by both officials and human rights actors, and by few signs of overt oppression. In May 2010, the new Public Chamber organized a conference devoted to society's role in tackling extremism, at which Dorogova and Khatazhukov spoke (Gazeta Yuga, 2010a). Although official representation was limited, if one extends the logic of Khatazhukov's conclusion vis-à-vis the August 2008 roundtable, the conference's organization under the remit of an official body at least signalled the permissibility of public debate on the topic. The same month, Khatazhukov attended a roundtable discussing interethnic tension, at which several officials and state-approved figures were also present (Gazeta Yuga, 2010b). Direct federal support for increased civil society engagement came in the form of the May 2010 meeting of the presidential council for developing civil society, hosted by the Kremlin and attended by Khatazhukov and State Duma deputy for Kabardino-Balkaria Adalbi Shkhagoshev (Gazeta Yuga, 2010c).

Such trends continued into 2011 and 2012. In February 2011, the Kabardino-Balkarian parliament held an extraordinary session to discuss the situation in the republic. Khatazhukov was one of those to address it, and he expressed opposition to illegal methods of combatting extremism (Gazeta Yuga, 2011a). The same month, the local Public Chamber met to discuss methods of combatting extremism and terrorism, at which Khatazhukov revealed an appeal to Kanokov from the relatives of insurgents, asking for a personal audience. Kanokov agreed, albeit declining to promise that anything would come of it (Gazeta Yuga, 2011a). In April, a Russian Public Chamber working group organized a roundtable to discuss radicalization in the republic, which was also attended by Khatazhukov. Kanokov surprised the attendees by appearing at the roundtable and promising to address the contentious issue of land reform in the republic (Gazeta Yuga, 2011b). In October 2012, Khatazhukov also attended a meeting between Kanokov and relatives of suspected insurgents (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2014d), providing a further opportunity for interaction with the authorities. Nevertheless, this engagement remained highly personalized, and Kabardino-Balkarian civil society as a whole experienced two contrasting events. On the one hand, in 2011, Dorogova ceased working in the republic on the medical advice of doctors, and she linked the necessity of the decision to the stress of her work and the sustained persecution she had experienced (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012d). On the other hand, this shrinking of already small civil society was offset by the appearance of a new actor in January 2012, the Mothers of Kabardino-Balkaria in Defence of the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens (hereafter: Mothers of Kabardino-Balkaria), headed by Maryam Akhmatova (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012c).

In contrast to Dagestan in this period of general liberalization, Kabardino-Balkaria witnessed neither a change of leadership nor the emergence of indigenous initiatives. The

former is perhaps unsurprising: Kanokov had ascended to the republican leadership only shortly before the Nalchik attack, and therefore could plausibly deny culpability for any of the policies that contributed to that event. The upsurge in violence that followed Astemirov's death, meanwhile, was not necessarily fully apparent at the time that the broader federal push for liberalization gained momentum. In other words, unlike in Dagestan and Ingushetia, there was no compelling need to replace the leadership. Kanokov's extensive business interests also meant he remained highly influential. However, the lack of local initiatives on a par with Dagestan's rehabilitation commission suggests that the impetus for liberalization came primarily from reading federal signals, rather than from any indigenous policy preferences. Indeed, when Kabardino-Balkaria finally implemented its own rehabilitation commission in January 2012 — almost 15 months after Dagestan — it did so with a noticeable lack of vigour. Whereas Dagestan's initiative stimulated extensive media debate over its merits, showing that the commission had at the very least opened up space in the public sphere for a debate over the merits of dialogue with the insurgency, no such claim could be made about Kabardino-Balkaria's. Both media coverage of, and official statements about, the commission were negligible. Indeed, six months later Khatazhukov observed that the commission had not done a great deal and very few people even knew of its existence (Gazeta Yuga, 2012). Two interviewees expressed similar views, arguing that the commission never functioned properly and only started to show signs of life after it was reformatted, outside the period of study (Interview HR201603001, HR201603002). Moreover, in its composition, the commission succeeded in surpassing Dagestan in its neglect of civil society, with the security services dominant and no one represented on it who was not an employee of an official body. Indeed, Khatazhukov noted that the Republican Human Rights Centre wasn't

represented on it, despite initiating the idea (Gazeta Yuga, 2012) — demonstrating that, even when channels for engagement were provided through meetings and conferences, this did not necessarily translate into more sustained, institutionalized engagement.

As the federal centre abandoned its tentative liberalization agenda, so too did the Kabardino-Balkarian authorities, and there were few examples of positive engagement between human rights actors and the authorities in 2013. At the same time, changes to federal law that illustrated the changing priorities of the Kremlin also impacted the political opportunities available to human rights actors at the republican level. The main interaction between the authorities and human rights groups in 2013 came in November, when the Kabardino-Balkarian Prosecutor's Office issued Khatazhukov with a warning about the impermissibility of violating the Foreign Agents law — although a Nalchik court ruled in Khatazhukov's favour on the matter, forcing the Prosecutor's Office to withdraw the document, and the Kabardino-Balkarian Supreme Court rejected the Prosecutor's Office's appeal in January 2014 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2014d). This possibly reflected differing interpretations among different branches of the authorities over how to apply the foreign agents law. Yet what changes to political opportunities in the second phase illustrate most clearly is that opportunities in the republic were much more directly determined by federal priorities than was the case in Dagestan. The local authorities could shape their precise form and could certainly obstruct policies, but the political winds of change came from Moscow, not Nalchik. In considering opportunities from the perspective of the insurgency, this is obviously highly significant, given that even the relative liberalization that occurred under Medvedev did not consider the possibility of dialogue with insurgent leaders, and the idea was anathema to Putin.

Phase Three: Departing From the Regional Norm

Partially bucking this trend of reproducing federal preferences at the local level, in the third phase Kabardino-Balkaria appeared to experience a slight liberalization that contrasted with developments in Dagestan. The appointment of Yuriy Kokov as Kabardino-Balkarian head in December 2013 appears to have led to a renewed effort to engage with civil society and human rights actors. In June 2014, Kokov met with the leaders of political parties and public associations, and Khatazhukov criticized the lack of activity on the part of the rehabilitation commissions (Gazeta Yuga, 2014a). The following month, the local Public Chamber discussed the development of civil society in the republic, with Khatazhukov complaining of a lack of access to the media (Gazeta Yuga, 2014b). In October-November, there were several examples of direct and constructive engagement between the Republican Human Rights Centre and the authorities. Thus, the organization's offices hosted two meetings attended by officials from a range of agencies, one of which discussed human rights violations during detentions with the relatives of victims, and the other of which discussed the problems of land reform and corruption (Gazeta Yuga, 2014c; Gazeta Yuga, 2014e). Khatazhukov also reported that he had worked directly with first deputy interior minister Kazbek Tatuyev to prevent people joining the insurgency (Gazeta Yuga, 2014d).

This illustrates that, even in circumstances where the preferences of the federal centre are dominant, local actors are not without agency and the preferences of individual leaders are significant. It also demonstrates the nuances in federal policy, and consequently the dangers of taking events in one republic, such as the increasing repression in Dagestan, as representative of the region as a whole. At this point in time, the local branch of the insurgency was far from vibrant, and consequently Kabardino-Balkaria ranked lower than

Dagestan as both a security threat to the Sochi Olympics and as a priority for the federal centre. At the same time, Kabardino-Balkaria was not immune to broader political shifts, and the mild liberalization needs to be viewed in the context of it not experiencing changes to the same degree as either Dagestan or Ingushetia in the preceding phase. In February 2014, the offices of For Human Rights, the Republican Human Rights Centre's parent organization, were closed down in Kabardino-Balkaria because of the law on foreign agents (Gazeta Yuga, 2015). In July 2015, the centre itself announced that it was terminating its activities because it had received funding from the US' National Fund for Supporting Democracy (NED). Khatazhukov claimed that, although the organization did not engage in political activity and the authorities had never had any complaints towards it, amendments to the foreign agents law compelled it to cease its activities (Gazeta Yuga, 2015). In actual fact, Khatazhukov remained a highly active figure on the human rights scene, and the changes formed part of a bureaucratic reorganization imposed on human rights actors across the country. Nevertheless, it demonstrated the declining political opportunities available nationwide, with human rights actors forced to concentrate on self-preservation rather than affecting change, and showed that federal-level shifts retained dominance over the apparent preferences of local leaders.

Framing Political Opportunities

Constraints on political opportunities were central to Astemirov's portrayal of violence as something undertaken as a last resort, indeed, as something almost regrettable. Thus, Astemirov claimed that the suppression of alternative channels of opposition to the status quo had left true Muslims with no choice but to resort to force to defend their faith (Astemirov, 2009a). He insisted:

if there was another, easier way to defend our faith, we would not be following the difficult path, we would try to settle everything in a peaceful way, without shedding blood (Astemirov, 2010c).

At the same time, depictions of contemporary political opportunities were inseparable from historical events in the republic. Just as the Nalchik attack shaped perceptions of political opportunities, so too did the diagnosis offered by the OVKBK leadership draw on their own prior experiences in their discussions of them. New developments merely served to reinforce the existing narrative and prove that nothing had fundamentally changed. Moreover, direct engagement with specific incidents sometimes related to the repercussions of the attack. Thus, the general leadership issued a statement denying involvement in threats received by Dorogova, characterizing her as a practicing Muslim and noting her work defending “Muslims who are held captive by the infidel” (Kavkazcenter, 2008f). To a degree, we can also see something resembling an uneasy balance between the political situation and the insurgency’s attitude to violence. The authorities’ policy of “enlightened authoritarianism” involved stepping back from some of the more flagrant practices of persecuting believers, and yet it continued to deny access to the political arena to non-state actors. It was, in other words, as much authoritarian as enlightened. The insurgency, by contrast, sought to contain violence, but nevertheless portrayed that violence that it did engage in as necessary and the only appropriate response. Both parties appeared concerned to avoid, at the least, exacerbating the situation. Thus, we can see the political dynamics, rather than specific opportunities per se, impacting leadership framing processes.

After Astemirov’s death, this situation changed in two ways. First – despite Dzhappuyev’s rhetorical efforts to maintain at least some constraints, and continuing beyond his leadership – concerns over escalation subsided, and both parties significantly increased the levels of violence in the republic. This was as much a result of security

service behaviours as insurgent ones, with mass abductions and extrajudicial killings from the one side and attacks on tourists and rank-and-file police on the other (Interview LW201702001). Yet this change in conflict dynamics did not, unlike in Dagestan, reflect broader changes in the political leadership. Second, amongst the entire post-Astemirov leadership, there was very little by way of direct framing of political opportunities. As time passed, the neglect of the outside world became more and more stark, with statements making increasingly few references to specific political events within the republic. This lack of engagement with the outside world meant such changes in political opportunities as did occur had little opportunity to be reflected in leadership statements.

Interpreting Ideological Change in Kabardino-Balkaria

In examining the ideology of the OVKBK leadership, we can observe a number of important characteristics. First and foremost, it is clear that Astemirov articulated the most comprehensive and sophisticated version of the IK's ideology found in the statements of any IK leader, and this vision had a lasting influence on the insurgency after his death. His diagnostic framing addressed not only the here-and-now and specific grievances, but also underlying systemic issues, making the case for the incompatibility of Shari'ah law and democracy. His prognostic framing explained what Shari'ah law actually meant, thereby adding substance to this vaguest of goals. In both cases, he was able to draw on his extensive educational and social capital, displaying his comfort in engaging with complex theological debates and leveraging his personal experience from the KBJ addressing Shari'ah law as a practical concern. We also find in his statements a degree of reluctance about violence that to a degree reflects its origins, with an emphasis on alternative methods of persuasion and extensive justification of the violence that was undertaken. In specifying

the insurgency's enemy, we find much the same hierarchy of enemies as that articulated by Umarov (Youngman, 2019), with Russia identified as the main focal point. Astemirov's intellectual world was broad, engaging with a range of scholars, but at the same time demonstrated the predominantly local focus of even this regionally significant leader. We can see that the identification of Russia as the source of the problem did not translate into detailed concern for events happening outside the republic, but rather Russia's role inside it. Illustrative of Astemirov's enduring impact, eight of his statements appear to have been released posthumously, including his lengthy last will and testament, which was recorded shortly before his death in an attempt to secure his legacy, but which was only published by IK websites two and a half years later, at the end of 2012. Astemirov cast a long shadow over the OVKBK, and he contributed a sort of communicative context that rendered the failings of his successors less stark.

There was, however, a notable decline in the quality of argumentation proffered by subsequent leaders, and we can see how more limited personal authority and external circumstances combined to limit the effectiveness of framing. Dzhappuyev was highly communicative relative to many other leaders, and sought to explain the insurgency's activities, but his explanations lacked Astemirov's depth, focusing on the immediate and losing those systemic dimensions. Equally significant, under his leadership, we see a persistence of Astemirov's efforts to constrain violence, with individual acts justified in great detail and a sharp distinction maintained between federal and local security services. Yet Dzhappuyev's framing is occurring in a situation in which violence is nevertheless escalating and there is much more to justify. Consideration of his framing suggests that the post-Astemirov increase in violence in the republic was as much a consequence of the removal of a restraining influence as a deliberate strategy by the new leadership. After

Dzhappuyev's death, we see a rapid decline in the quality of the ideology articulated by the leadership, with extremely limited articulation of what the insurgency was fighting against and for. To a considerable degree, we can talk about leadership by default, in which the high rates of attrition meant that any surviving member of the OVKBK leadership automatically ascended to the position of overall emir. Only with the arrival of the last such emir, Shebzukhov, do we see any notable improvement in the rhetorical sophistication of the leadership, and even this is relative to his immediate predecessors and compares poorly to either Astemirov or Dzhappuyev. Yet his intellectual world shows that he is considerably removed from the political realities of the republic — by this point, it is an insurgency looking almost exclusively inwards. Equally important, there does not appear to be much of an insurgency left to articulate an ideology for.

Chapter Six

Ingushetia

Introduction

Ingushetia represents something of a paradox with regards to its relationship to the regional insurgency. On the one hand, it is the republic with the closest social, cultural, historical, and political links to Chechnya. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it was the republic most directly affected by the conflict in the neighbouring republic. Chechen rebel fighters used Ingushetia as an outlet from the conflict zone, and they carried out their first major operation on Ingushetian territory in May 2000 (Amnesty International, 2012). Ingushetians fought in the ranks of the ChRI and participated in some of its largest operations, including the 2004 Beslan school attack and Nazran raid and the 2005 attack on Nalchik. On the other hand, Ingushetia — thanks in no small part to the skillful manoeuvrings of President Ruslan Aushev (1993-2002) — managed to avoid being dragged into war. The case of Ingushetia gives rise to questions of what changed, and how did these changes manifest themselves in the ideology of the insurgent leadership? Equally importantly, given the close links between Chechen and Ingushetian rebels and the political and geographic peculiarities of the two, to what degree can we speak of a distinct Ingushetian ideology?

In order to answer these questions, this chapter mirrors the structure of the preceding two. The first section looks at the evolution of the Ingushetian branch of the insurgency and how it moved from relative stability to briefly overtake Chechnya as a focal point for regional violence. The second through to the fourth parts examine the evolution of

leadership framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities across the lifespan of the IK, following the same temporal logic of the previous two chapters. The final section then offers some preliminary conclusions about the nature of the ideology of the Ingushetian branch and how it was affected by its internal and external contexts.

The Evolution of Conflict in Ingushetia

Ingushetia's close links and geographic proximity to Chechnya and its comparatively small size (with a population of just over 400,000, it is the 74th largest of Russia's federal subjects) have led to its insurgency being largely neglected as a subject of study in its own right. Within academic literature, it is overwhelmingly mentioned either from a Chechen perspective or alongside Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan in discussions of a broader regionalization of conflict. Although such literature tends in any case to be heavily biased towards Chechnya, detailed case studies have investigated Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria in a manner that is not true of Ingushetia. For some authors, the insurgency in Ingushetia is simply a by-product of the conflict in Chechnya and the strategy of Chechen rebel leaders. Hahn (2007:71), for example, views the Ingushetian insurgency as having "simply spread from the neighboring Chechens." Although he notes the emergence of specifically Ingushetian groups like Khalifat, reportedly involved in the 2004 Beslan attack, and the Ingush Jama'at, led by Gorchkhanov until his death in the 2005 Nalchik attack, his reading of the entire insurgency is through the lens of events in Chechnya. Sagramoso (2007:703-704), meanwhile, argues that Chechnya provided "an initial network of support for the emergence of radical jama'ats" in the republic and devotes little attention to the origins of Ingushetian groups compared to those in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria. Indeed, when one surveys the literature, one emerges with the impression that the

insurgency appeared there as if by magic: One moment, Ingushetia is a footnote in the conflict in Chechnya,¹⁹ the next authors are talking about a local insurgency as if it was always there. Indicative of this, Campana and Ratelle (2014:118) rightly criticize existing works for failing “to integrate local actors of Dagestani and Ingush origin into the analysis.” Their own explanation, however, talks of the existence of radical groups in the republic without explaining their origins, and the only Ingushetian actors to even receive a mention are the first emir of the IK’s G1alg1ayche (Ingushetian) Vilayyat, Ali Taziyev (Akhmed Yevloyev, Magas) and prominent ideologist Aleksandr Tikhomirov (Said Buryatskiy).

What, then, are the origins of the Ingushetian insurgency, and to what degree was it the product of events in Ingushetia, rather than Chechnya? In so far as an answer can be found, it appears that the Chechen and Ingushetian perspectives are impossible to disentangle. Whereas in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria we are able to identify socio-political processes quite distinct from the Chechen conflict — even if they ultimately interacted with it — this appears to be much harder to do in the case of Ingushetia. The International Crisis Group (2012), for example, argues that radical groups emerged first in the refugee camps created by the Chechen wars and spread from there to Ingushetian settlements. Absent further research into these processes, however, we cannot say what the relative influence in them of Ingushetian versus Chechen actors was, nor can we reach a reliable assessment of the differences between the various combat jama’ats that emerged.

At the same time, there appears to be broad consensus among human rights monitors

¹⁹ In detailing Russia’s supposed “Islamic threat,” Hahn (2007), for example, dedicates chapters to instability in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Tatarsta, but does not afford Ingushetia the same level of attention. The same is true of other works on the region produced in the mid- to late-2000s (e.g. Howard, 2001, an edited volume drawing on conference proceedings from 2006 and 2007).

and academics (O’Loughlin, Holland and Witmer, 2011; Amnesty International, 2012; International Crisis Group; 2012) that the removal of Aushev and the rights violations and corruption that proliferated under his successor, Murat Zyazikov, greatly contributed to the spread of violence in the republic. Members of the Chechen rebel leadership undoubtedly sought to exacerbate the situation, and ethnic tensions, as part of their strategy to relieve the pressure on Chechnya (Moore, 2012a). Whatever their origins, the ChRI ultimately consolidated the majority of Ingushetian jama’ats with the proclamation of the Caucasus Front in 2005 and the appointment of first Gorchkhanov and then Taziyev as commanders of the Ingushetian Sector. Throughout 2006 and particularly 2007, the republic witnessed a significant escalation in violence, both in the form of insurgent attacks and security service operations (Human Rights Watch, 2008; Amnesty International, 2012). By early 2007, human rights activists were asserting that “Ingushetia, without doubt, remains the least stable region in Southern Russia” (Memorial 2007a).

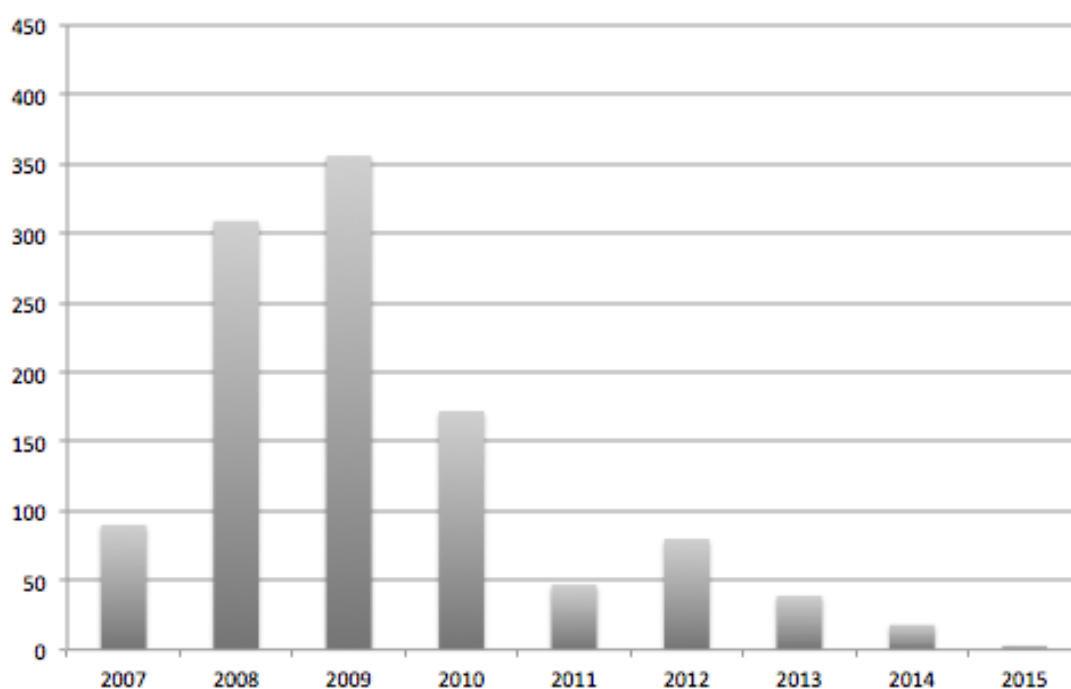


Figure 25. Security service losses in Ingushetia by year (Memorial, 2016a).

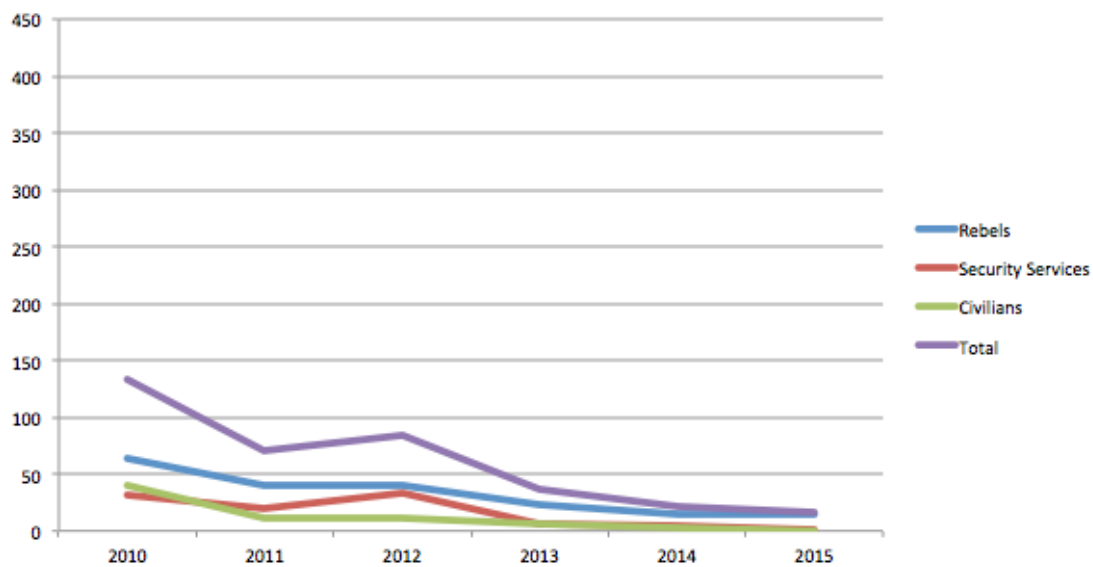


Figure 26. Numbers killed in Ingushetia by actor category, 2010-2014 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011c, 2012b, 2013a, 2014c, 2015c, 2016c).

Framing

Phase One

Between Neglected and Localized Diagnoses

If the existing literature is ambiguous as to whether we can speak of an Ingushetian insurgency distinct from a Chechen one, then we might hope that diagnostic framing in insurgent leadership communiqués would be more revealing. However, in the cases of the insurgency's two leading personalities during this phase, Taziyev and Tikhomirov, we find such hopes disappointed. Neither devoted attention to offering a systemic diagnosis of what the insurgency was fighting. A grievance narrative was absent from Taziyev's statements and both peripheral and biased towards Chechnya in Tikhomirov's.²⁰ There was a notable

²⁰ In part, this is a consequence of the material under consideration: Taziyev issued only two statements as leader, and all but two already-available parts of Tikhomirov's posthumously released 32-part lecture series "Journey to Eternal Life" were excluded on

lack of debate over structural issues, either relating to democracy in general or the Russian political system in particular. Tikhomirov accused “the Russian and Chechen *kuffar* [of pursuing] a policy of repression, humiliation, beatings and torture” (Tikhomirov, 2008b). He evoked the trope of Russia “waging a war against Islam” and accused it of trying to deceive Muslims with the construction of mosques, as part of a strategy “to divide Muslims into ‘civilian’ and ‘terrorist.’” This was crafted onto a historical narrative that drew parallels with temporary Soviet concessions to Islam, as well as with Stepashin’s short-lived agreement with the Kadar zone. This narrative obviously claimed a regional relevance. Yet, when it came to citing contemporary examples, he more often than not drew on Chechen ones (Tikhomirov, 2009a, 2009b). Equally important, however, is that this grievance narrative was not a focal point of Tikhomirov’s communiqués and is relatively constrained in the context of his overall output.

A clearer diagnosis was offered in the statements issued in the name of the general leadership. As in Dagestan, these portrayed Russia as being on the verge of collapse, arguing that it was,

no longer the empire that it was, but a colossus on clay legs, which is already about to collapse under the weight of its own crimes, and all that remains is for us to push it. It is an enormous drunken thug, which will finish off the vodka from the bottle and inescapably fall down dead (Kavkazcenter, 2010e).

These statements devoted little by way of attention to the nature of the political system. Rather, they focused on a mid-range critique of social mores and moral purity, rather than the underlying structures. The leadership highlighted what it considered to be social depravity, cataloguing various problems — alcoholism, drug addiction, venereal diseases

resource grounds. Yet this only satisfies as a partial explanation. Tikhomirov’s included output nevertheless amounted to a substantial body of material

— that would shortly overcome the “infidel” state (Kavkazcenter, 2008c, 2009b, 2009g, 2010e). The implication was that these problems were inherent to the very nature of the system. One statement extensively detailed the haram practices that supposedly plagued the republic, claiming that “debauchery, bribery, empty rhetoric and deception are today permanent companions to everyday life” (Kavkazcenter, 2008d)

Whether this mid-range critique can be considered distinctly “Ingushetian” is open to debate. Although it talked about the situation in the republic, much the same arguments would not have looked out of place in the statements of Jama’at Shari’at, and they reflected a broader Salafi social critique. Where a much more distinctly Ingushetian perspective existed was in the grievance narrative articulated by the leadership. One statement claimed, for example, that “in recent years, several hundred Ingushetian residents have disappeared without trace, more than 500 were simply shot.” It linked these to similar practices elsewhere, but focused primarily on the republic (Kavkazcenter, 2007a). Another statement accused Russia of “mercilessly annihilating the indigenous people, and terrorizing those who remained alive, expending every effort to turn them into slaves” (Kavkazcenter, 2010e). This narrative was situated in a broader context of Russian colonial expansion and the Chechen wars (Hunafa, 2008a; Kavkazcenter, 2009c, 2009f, 2010e). At the same time, it also drew on distinctly local conflict dynamics, claiming that they did not want to be “slaves to the Russian, Ossetian, and other infidels” (Kavkazcenter, 2010e). The Stalin-era deportations, too, were referenced as specifically applying to the Ingush (Kavkazcenter, 2007a), even though such framing would have been equally applicable to the Chechens and Balkars. This illustrates how grievance narratives could be highly localized and co-opt nationalist ones, even while falling within a broader regional framing of the conflict. Indeed, to a degree, the general leadership simply ignored the regional dimensions of its

framing. Thus, we can talk about a distinctly Ingushetian diagnosis, but only in the communiqués of a depersonified leadership, not its most visible representatives.

Departing Restraint

A lack of specificity over what the insurgency was seeking to change was replicated in a lack of clarity over its goals. In so far as statements identified an ultimate aim, they did so through a process of rejecting the alternatives. Tikhomirov insisted:

The times have passed when the fighting was done under the slogans of freedom and immortality, when there were such concepts as patriotism, national freedom and suchlike. Those false concepts are in the past (Tikhomirov, 2008a).

He did not, however, substitute a more positive vision for these supposedly false concepts. The general leadership claimed that the proclamation of the IK reflected the will of all Muslims to fight for the establishment of Shari'ah rather than democracy, insisting that Ingushetian rebels had pledged allegiance to Sadulayev in 2005 “as Emir of the Mujahideen of the Caucasus, not as president of the ChRI” (Kavkazcenter, 2007b). Yet only minimal subsequent attention was afforded to developing a positive agenda and shaping a vision of a future polity governed by Shari'ah law. One statement established as a goal, “alongside the priority tasks of destroying Allah’s enemies and defending our population from destruction and genocide,” the purging of “dens of iniquity, gambling parlours and so forth” (Kavkazcenter, 2008c). Another spoke of consolidating Shari'ah authority on the IK’s territory through *da’wa* (proselytization), providing social support to the families of martyrs, and combatting the spread of alcohol, drugs, and other forms of debauchery (Kavkazcenter, 2008d). This, however, was as specific as they got, and defined the insurgency’s goals through various forms of opposition.

If the ‘why’ was, at best, mostly implicit in statements, the ‘how’ occupied a central position. Statements offered extensive justification for individual attacks and directed violence against the security services and sellers of drugs and alcohol in particular (Kavkazcenter, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d). Their justification of violence occupied something of an intermediary position between the gleeful portrayals found in the statements of Jama’at Shari’at and the apparent reluctance of the Kabardino-Balkarian leadership, one that pointed to departing restraint. An August 2008 statement spoke about how the insurgents had initially spared traffic and patrol personnel, only to later understand that “we pitied them in vain.” At the same time, it declared a moratorium on attacks on local police, on the grounds that they were quitting the Interior Ministry in large numbers and should be given an opportunity to do so (Kavkazcenter, 2008b). Another statement claimed that the insurgency had long been reluctant to target religious officials, but that some “red imams” were obstructing the religious education of young people and were therefore legitimate targets of attacks (Hunafa, 2008b). By June 2009, this apparent restraint had receded further into the distance, with the leadership claiming that an escalation in the war against Islam had compelled a reconsideration of priorities, meaning anyone who worked for the infidel was a target, including women (Kavkazcenter, 2009b, 2009c). Another statement described killing local security service personnel as a secondary task, but claimed “they have changed their attitude, and we accordingly ours” (Kavkazcenter, 2009e). In doing so, the leadership displaced blame for violence on to the security services themselves (Hunafa, 2008a).

Another important theme in justifying violence was an evident concern with the problems of imposters and informants. Taziyev, for example, established monitoring the media for provocateurs and those who falsely claimed to speak in the name of the

insurgency as a priority (Taziyev, 2009). The general leadership claimed that it had received information about abductions, robberies and extortion conducted by people claiming to collect money for jihad, and denied any involvement in these activities and threatened those involved (Kavkazcenter, 2008a). Another statement referenced threats to cafes, hairdressers, and shops, identifying them — as seen in the discussion of diagnostic framing — as a source of debauchery but insisting on the importance of *da'wa* before resorting to violence (a restraint not applied to sellers of drugs and alcohol, which were seen as a greater source of corruption) (Hunafa, 2008b). These statements point to an important issue rarely faced by non-clandestine social movements: the ability of outsiders to identify movement actions and participants. This functions as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it offers a degree of plausible deniability, in that the insurgency can deny involvement in attacks if they turn out to be unpopular among target audiences. On the other hand, it allows other actors to obtain resources that may otherwise have gone to the insurgency and means that insurgents can be forced to deal with the consequences of actions other than their own. In this phase, we see the insurgency's leadership disassociate itself from attacks on certain religious officials, other than the “red imams” (Hunafa, 2008b), a civilian vehicle, and the Ingushetian sports minister (Kavkazcenter, 2009f). The insurgency claimed that these actions were perpetrated by those seeking to discredit jihad. Whether true or not, it points to the leadership's desire to distance themselves from their consequences. In a related vein, a repeated concern with informers, and accusations against them as acting as “provocateurs” (Hunafa, 2008b; Kavkazcenter, 2009b, 2009h), suggest both a concern for potential reactions against attack on civilians and a desire to attribute blame for certain incidents on to other actors.

In considering the justification of violence, it is the position articulated by Tikhomirov

that warrants special consideration. The substance of his argument about its legitimacy had much in common with that articulated by other members of the IK leadership. He claimed that the concept of jihad was supported by hadith too numerous to mention, and, like Astemirov, he portrayed the conflict in the Caucasus as a legitimate defensive jihad. In making this case, he elevated jihad to a par with the hajj or umrah, the greater and lesser pilgrimages to Mecca (Tikhomirov, 2008a). He dismissed the alternatives, citing the example of the Kadar Zone as illustrative of the duplicity of the infidel and the impossibility of reaching peaceful agreement with them (Tikhomirov, 2009a).

None of these arguments were unique to Tikhomirov; indeed, they shared much in common with the various scholars whose position he cited in support of his own. What made Tikhomirov unique was the way that jihad existed in his communiqués only as an abstraction and served an almost metaphorical and spiritual purpose, independent of time and place. His statements rarely dealt with violence as something specific, and as such they offered scant justification for its use. Noticeably, the corpus analysed here offered no explanation of the suicide attacks that he was personally involved in organizing. Even where specific incidents were mentioned, the focus was not on the act and its legitimacy so much as the character of its practitioners. Thus, for example, in one statement he talks of a specific clash, but rather than explain its necessity, he portrays it as a heroic act, in which the noble, brave mujahid is cast against the callous and cowardly infidel (Tikhomirov, 2009a). In another, the possibility of violence is cast in artistic, almost poetic terms:

And let's say you have with you only an assault rifle and 200 bullets. Let's say you don't even have a grenade launcher. Let's say you don't know where you're going to find ammunition tomorrow. Let's say that the whole world with the millions-strong armies of Satan's vassals is against you. But know that they are all just Allah's creatures, which He can destroy without you firing a shot.

That they are just a test for the believer (Tikhomirov, 2009a).

Tikhomirov's was almost a jihad without violence, in which the act is not a transgression of social norms requiring explanation, but a means of self-realization. This self-realization did not depend on a particular time or place, and so applied across and beyond the North Caucasus. It was a rhetorical style that was unique to Tikhomirov, and may have contributed to his unique and enduring appeal.

Personalized Narratives and the Importance of Expediency

The general leadership's efforts to inspire participation drew on the same Manichean portrayal that we have seen elsewhere, and they emphasized the apparent lack of virtues of their opponents. They made recourse, for example, to the idea that those who had worked for the infidel were people who had sold their honour, conscience, and religion for the miserly reward of slaves (Kavkazcenter, 2009d). They also recounted stories of how members of the security services had failed to come to the aid of attacked colleagues or fled from the scene of insurgent attacks (Kavkazcenter, 2009e). One story claimed that local police would even dress in women's clothing to make good their escape, and insisted that they were willing to sell anyone out, it's "just a question of price" (Hunafa, 2008a). At the same time, the definition of 'us' sought to address distinct local identities, in doing so downplaying the significance of ethnicity as a motivating factor. One statement claimed that "Among the Ossetians there are many Muslims whose fear of God, sincerity and strength of belief in Allah would be the envy of many people from among the so-called 'traditional Muslims'" (Hunafa, 2008a). These portrayals appeared in the context of the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, with the Ingushetian leadership seeking to make it clear that it was "the position of the conflicting sides in relation to Muslims," rather than

nationality or ethnicity, that was important in determining which side to support (Hunafa, 2008a). This reflected the position adopted by Umarov, who expressed common cause with Georgia (Youngman, 2019), demonstrating how leaders could deemphasize particular identity boundaries when expedient.

In considering identity framing, we again see a clear distinction between the general leadership and Tikhomirov. Like others, Tikhomirov adhered to a Manichean portrayal, claiming — albeit without explicitly referencing the associated concept of *al-wala wal-bara*, part of a stylistic tendency to relay Islamic concepts in readily understandable language (Garayev, 2017) — that “hatred between Muslims and infidels is an integral part of this religion” (Tikhomirov, 2009b). The identity he focused on, however, was a Muslim one, sometimes contrasted against local ethnic identities. He insisted: “a Russian Muslim is our beloved brother, whereas a Chechen or infidel from the Caucasus is our sworn enemy and we now conduct jihad against them” (Tikhomirov, 2008a). Stylistically, too, he was distinct not only from the general Ingushetian leadership, but from all other IK leaders. His statements were often in narrative form, resembling short stories rather than political statements or news reports. As such, he focused a great deal of attention on personal virtues and the sacrifices of those who were fighting, relating highly personal stories — intermeshed with his own — that highlighted the egalitarianism and fraternity of the mujahideen community (Tikhomirov, 2008b, 2010a). His strategy of identification operated at the personal, rather than the group level. The distinction can also be seen in the explicit mobilization strategies evoked. The general leadership highlighted examples of supposed eulogization, praising individuals in Ingushetia and beyond who had sacrificed for the insurgency and claiming “it is not secret that every mujahid desires death more than life” (Hunafa, 2008b). This made recourse to a standard jihadist trope. Tikhomirov, by contrast,

also praised the departed, but focused on his personal yearning for martyrdom and his sadness at being left behind, such were the rewards on offer (Buryatskiy, 2010a).

Arguably, however, the most important feature of Tikhomirov's motivational framing was the amount of attention he devoted to addressing concerns over the expediency of action — a theme entirely missing from general leadership statements. In evoking the notion of defensive jihad, he insisted that this rendered concerns over whether the insurgency was strong enough to win irrelevant: "I have looked through many books by ancient scholars and I did not find this formula anywhere, that defensive jihad needs strength. This does not exist anywhere" (Tikhomirov, 2008a). Indeed, it was the insurgency's very weakness that made jihad mandatory (Tikhomirov, 2008a, 2009a). Considerable space is devoted to rebutting the views of Rabia al-Madkhali, decan of the hadith faculty at Medina Islamic University, and popular Salafi preachers Rinat Abu Mukhammad from Kazakhstan and Gamet Suleymanov from Azerbaijan (Tikhomirov, 2009a). Tikhomirov spoke extensively about rumours that the insurgency is fighting for money or oil or is under the control of the FSB, acknowledging historical precedents for such claims and citing his own fears of such prior to joining. However, he argued that these fears were dispelled as soon as he joined; that insurgent leaders endured great sacrifices and had no use for money; that only Allah, rather than the FSB, can know everything; and that the survival of the insurgency despite Russia having aerial power, heavy artillery and numerical superiority is testament to Allah's blessing for jihad (Tikhomirov, 2008b, 2009a). Tikhomirov demonstrated an acute awareness of the counterarguments to action, and seeks to address these directly. Indeed, drawing on his personalized narrative, he portrayed difficulties as the very thing that provide an opportunity for self-realization, offering the conditions in which one can be tested (Tikhomirov, 2009a).

Phase Two

Incorporating Inter-Ethnic Grievances

Taziyev's and Tikhomirov's successors as leaders of the G1alglayche Vilayyat maintained a very low profile, to the point that it was often hard to ascertain who was actually leading the insurgency at any given time. Dzhamaleyl Mutaliyev (Adam) issued only two statements, in August and September 2010, while Artur Gatagazhev (Abdullakh/Ubaydullakh) issued only one within this phase, in July 2013. A qadi by the name of Abu Dudzhana was also active in the phase, issuing two statements, in November 2010 and November 2011. The most distinct feature of their diagnostic framing was the reemergence of grievances directed against the Ossetians. Mutaliyev claimed that Ingush lands were occupied by the Ossetian infidel and that "it is well known that Ossetia has become an outpost of the Russian infidels for the expansion in the North Caucasus." The statement justified the 9 September 2010 suicide attack in Vladikavkaz as a "continuation of our jihad with the Ossetian infidel on occupied Ingush territories," accusing Ossetians of "anti-Islamic activity" (Mutaliyev, 2010b). Abu Dudzhana, too, portrayed the situation as an occupation, albeit within a distinctly religious framework — the occupation of Muslim lands by the infidel, who were guilty of spilling the blood of Muslims. Again referencing the Ossetians, he portrayed today's treatment of Muslims as a continuation of the suppression of religion in the Soviet era (Abu Dudzhana, 2010). Campana and Ratelle (2014:127) interpret these statements as evidence of how "local agendas may displace regional ones" with a change of leadership and "the jihadization process is still incomplete in Ingushetia." Yet the diagnostic and motivational framing in phase one, and the plausible claim that the Beslan attack was intended to aggravate ethnic tensions in service of a

jihadist regionalization of the conflict (Moore, 2012a), demonstrate that the Ingush-Ossetian divide was always salient. An alternative interpretation of these statements, therefore, is that they illustrate how a jihadist agenda can adapt to incorporate existing conflict narratives when the dividing identity lines for those conflicts operate in harmony with the new agenda.

The general leadership, much like Mutaliyev, made recourse to the mid-level diagnosis of occupation, reinforcing it with a broader grievance narrative. It spoke of “liberating the lands of the Caucasus from infidel occupation” (Kavkazcenter, 2010f) and claimed the main concern of the Ingushetian authorities was “defending the interests of the Russian occupying authorities on our land” (Kavkazcenter, 2013b). As in the previous phase, this occupation narrative incorporated existing ethnic tensions, insisting “we have not forgotten and not forgiven the Ossetian infidels for the blood of our brothers and sisters” (Kavkazcenter, 2010h). Other statements spoke of the degraded situation facing Muslims everywhere (Kavkazcenter, 2010g) and accused the authorities of mistreating Muslims, preventing women from covering their heads, and blaming them for a series of abductions and murders (Kavkazcenter, 2012b, 2012d). However, it is notable that diagnostic framing declined over time, particularly under the leadership of Gatagazhev. Gatagazhev’s own diagnosis was limited to describing the republican authorities as “scumbags, liars, thieves, murderers” and portraying the situation in the republic as “a war between Islam and disbelief” (Gatagazhev, 2013). Once again, there was a lack of clarity over what, exactly, the insurgency was fighting against.

Balancing Priorities

Mutaliyev established a goal for the insurgency that stemmed directly from his

diagnosis: “driving out the occupiers and returning to Muslims the lands of the Caucasus and establishing on them Islamic rule” (Mutaliyev, 2010b). His positioning of the Ingushetian branch of the insurgency bore strong similarities to the position of Umarov (Youngman, 2019). It is perhaps therefore unsurprising that Mutaliyev offered his support to Umarov when the leadership split emerged in 2010-2011. He claimed that the insurgency was not concerned that “the infidels have included us on the ‘blacklist of terrorists,’” — a reference to the Russian Supreme Court’s decision to designate the IK a terrorist organization in February 2010. Mutaliyev’s statement established the insurgency’s goal as being “to elevate His Word and establish His Religion” (Mutaliyev, 2010a). Abu Dudzhana too, spoke of driving out the Ossetians and repeatedly articulated the goal of establishing Shari’ah (Abu Dudzhana, 2010). Gatagazhev and the general leadership, by contrast, failed to articulate any goals for the movement.

If Ingushetian insurgent leaders were limited in their specification of concrete goals, they were more conscientious in explaining why they were fighting and, equally important, who they were and were not fighting against. In the case of Mutaliyev, these explanations were exclusively focused on Ingushetian realities, rather than what was happening in the broader region or even neighbouring Chechnya. He blamed the Kremlin for “pitilessly destroying Ossetian children, so as to not make concessions to the mujahideen” during the Beslan school siege, and he claimed that Ossetians would remain a target of attack “until Muslim lands are returned to their masters, and until the anti-Islamic activities of the Ossetians cease.” He also accused the security services of being behind an attempt on the life of popular Salafi preacher Khamzat Chumakov, claiming that, despite disagreements, he was “one of the few principled, courageous, and uncorrupted theologians” in the republic. Mutaliyev portrayed the attack as an attempt to “destabilize the situation” in the

republic and “discredit the mujahideen” (Mutaliyev, 2010b).

Gatagazhev likewise described Chumakov as “a sincere Muslim,” claiming that the Ingushetian authorities had many reasons to dislike and potentially try to kill him (Gatagazhev, 2013). In dealing with Chumakov, the Ingushetian insurgency clearly faced something of a dilemma. On the one hand, criticizing him would have risked alienating a considerable audience, including many whom the insurgent leadership might wish to target as potential supporters. On the other hand, he potentially represented a particularly dangerous — from the insurgency’s perspective — rival position, advocating a view of social mores in line with the insurgency’s own, but not calling for violence as a way of achieving it. Gatagazhev claimed that Chumakov was “restraining a not-inconsiderable portion of young Ingush who listen to him from jihad,” but expressed the hope that he would follow the path of Astemirov, Mukozhev, Tikhomirov and AQ ideologist Anwar al-Awlaki (Gatagazhev, 2013).

Abu Dudzhana offered the most extensive justification for insurgent activities in the entire post-Tikhomirov insurgency. Violence was portrayed as a necessity to achieving the supremacy of Shari’ah, rather than a goal in and of itself:

Today, we cannot not kill. For, after we have come out to establish Allah’s word, we cannot not neutralize that which fights against the establishment of Allah’s law. And if it fights against us, it must be killed. We kill these people, not because we want this, but because it is Allah’s decree (Abu Dudzhana, 2010).

The general leadership, by contrast, devoted considerable time to justifying individual attacks, portraying targets as implicating in various crimes or attacks as retribution for particular incidents (Kavkazcenter, 2011, 2012c, 2012d). Focus, to a degree, shifted towards supposed internal enemies among the people, with the leadership persisting in

viewing “the Ossetian infidel as a long-standing enemy of our people,” but claiming that the greatest energy needed to be directed not at the infidel, but at the apostates within the ranks of the Ingushetian people (Kavkazcenter, 2010h). Similarly, threats were directed at supposed informers (Kavkazcenter, 2012d). There was also a reemergence of the distinction between Russian security services and rank-and-file police officers, with the leadership claiming that it had made a decision the preceding year not to kill local government agency employees “who do not display hostility towards Muslims.” It expressed a preference for such people to repent rather than die and blamed those killed by insurgents on an agent the FSB had infiltrated into its ranks (Hunafa, 2011).

Isolated Sophistication

Mutaliyev’s statements did not explicitly call on people to mobilize in response to the supposed occupation of the region or behind the insurgency. If a motivational element was present, it was implicit: If you were Ingush, then how could you not want to redress the ongoing occupation of Ingush lands by Ossetian infidels? Qadi Abu Dudzhana, by contrast, was more transparent, employing a four-part strategy to motivate participation. The first part evoked the concept of obligation, something that he insisted fell on anyone over the age of 15 in the context of Muslim lands being occupied. Like Tikhomirov, however, he sought to directly address rumours that the insurgents were fighting for money or personal gain, but rather to fulfill their duty. This obligation extending beyond simply fighting: He claimed that everyone should help according to their ability, be it through provisions or transport. The second part sought to portray the insurgents as blessed by Allah, while the infidel faced his punishment. Abu Dudzhana sought to refute the argument of those who claimed that jihad was inappropriate because of insufficient strength, less on the grounds

evoked by Astemirov and Tikhomirov that strength had nothing to do with fulfilling one's duty, and more on the grounds that they would be victorious in the end. Jihad and any difficulties that it encountered represented Allah's blessing, granting an opportunity to fight on Allah's path. The third part built on the idea of fulfilling Allah's will to portray death and martyrdom as noble sacrifices and a path to receiving divine awards. Negatives, therefore, were spun into positives, offering a test of one's faith that true Muslims would be amply rewarded for if they passed. The final part portrayed conflict as an inevitable consequence of the identities of the protagonists, with Christians and Jews compelled to destroy those Muslims with courage and virtue and subjugate the remainder. Abu Dudzhana on the one hand portrayed civilians as occupying the territory between true Muslims, i.e. the insurgents, and the infidel, and he called on them to not oppose, inform on or betray the insurgents, but rather to stay away from the infidel to allow the insurgency to carry out its work. At the same time, the very middle ground that they occupied was an illusion, and Muslims would, one way or another, have no choice but to either side with the insurgency or face degradation (Abu Dudzhana, 2010, 2011).

The general leadership's motivational framing was much less sophisticated and generally limited, but where it existed it drew on both the concept of fulfilling one's duty and historical narratives. Reporting on Tikhomirov's death, it portrayed him as someone who had left behind other religious work, his studies, and his family in order to fulfill his religious obligations. It also claimed that Tikhomirov had been held back from dying for the cause earlier by the orders of Umarov and described him as "a living reproach to those scholars and seekers of knowledge, in particular Ingush ones, who, thinking up pathetic justifications, sit out jihad at home or abroad" (Kavkazcenter, 2010d). The Ossetians, meanwhile, were portrayed as "ancient enemies of our people" (Kavkazcenter, 2010h),

while the insurgents were the heirs to those who resisted Russia's colonial expansion (Kavkazcenter, 2010e).

Phase Three

Abstract War

In assessing diagnostic framing in the third phase, the problem of scarcity reemerges: Gatagazhev issued only one additional statement, a video of less than two minutes, and Beslan Makhauri (Mukhammad) only two, totaling less than three minutes. Within these statements, there was nothing by way of explanation of what the insurgency was fighting against: There was no discussion of structural issues, nor any articulated grievances. Instead, explanatory work was limited to the six statements attributed to the general leadership. Here, the main theme to emerge was the idea of Russia being at war with Islam, both persecuting believers and preventing them from observing their faith. A statement justifying the 27 August 2013 assassination of Ingushetian Security Council Secretary Akhmed Kotiyev portrayed him as an enemy of Islam and involved in the republic's "death squadrons" (Kavazcenter, 2013b). Another statement portrayed the decision of a Novorossiysk court²¹ to designate a popular translation of the Qur'an as "extremist" as part of a broader trend in which women were forbidden from wearing hijabs and Islamic films were banned (Hunafa, 2013).

Failing To Explain new Priorities

The general rebel leadership used Kotiyev's assassination to issue a warning to "all those who have come out on the path of war with Islam and Muslims to repent in this,

²¹ See Gazeta.ru (2013). The decision was overturned by a Krasnodar district court in December 2013 (Regnum, 2013).

reject disbelief and turn to Allah” (Kavazcenter, 2013b). Elsewhere, an attack on a Malgobek police employee was justified through his alleged involvement in the torture of Muslims in 2008 and other crimes carried out by his department (Kavkazcenter, 2014). In both cases, violence was explicitly linked to concrete behaviours by the individuals concerned, and thus was more reminiscent of the relatively constrained rhetoric of the early years of the IK in Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria than that of Jama’at Shari’at in Dagestan. Indeed, the Ingushetian leadership insisted that its main target remained “the heads and standard bearers of infidelity,” and specified its goal as being not merely to deliver punishment for violating the tenets of Islam, but “to give people the chance to reject disbelief and sins” (Kavazcenter, 2013b). Both statements threatened punishment for crimes committed, but also offered the option of repenting for those sins — albeit on the insurgency’s terms.

In considering prognostic framing, however, what is absent is arguably far more significant than what is present. Gatagazhev’s sole statement consisted of nothing more than a ritualistic pledge of allegiance to Kebekov once he assumed the role of overall IK emir (Gatagazhev, 2014). It thus tells us little about the insurgency’s goals or ideological priorities. More notably, Makhauri took a major decision regarding the insurgency’s ideological allegiances, breaking away from the IK and pledging allegiance to IS leader Al-Baghdadi, yet he offered no explanation for that decision. His first address on the matter was a study in ambiguity, with him claiming he was “clarifying our position with respect to the Caliphate,” but implying allegiance rather than offering a formal pledge of *bayat* (Makhauri, 2015a). The second statement offered that formal pledge on behalf of the entire Ingushetian insurgency, but again offered no explanation for the decision (Makhauri, 2015b). Makhauri made no effort to explain why allegiance to IS offered a better path than

the IK to achieving the insurgency's already undefined goals or to persuade doubters.

Talking to Oneself

Part of the reason for the failure of both Gatagazhev and Makhauri to explain their decision-making may lie in the intended audience for their statements. Their three addresses were explicitly directed to fellow insurgents, rather than towards the general public. Gatagazhev addressed Kebekov himself, as well as other rebels. Despite the potentially controversial nature of his decision, Makhauri, too, directed his message to Al-Baghdadi and two prominent North Caucasians allied to him, Tarkhan Batirashvili (Umar al-Shishani) and Islam Atabiyev (Abu Dzhikhad). This was, therefore, an insurgency that was looking inwards, at least at the senior-most level. In such circumstances, the lack of diagnostic framing at the very least may be understandable: if insurgents are already in agreement over the nature of the problem, then further discussion is hardly necessary. The lack of prognostic framing, the lack of explanation of the decision to break from one group and join another, is perhaps more puzzling, given that there is at this time a public dispute between defecting and loyalist IK leaders. Yet Makhauri's audience for the videos is predominantly insurgents outside Ingushetia. If the insurgent leadership by this stage is inwardly focused, then discussions with Ingushetian and Chechen rebels can take place away from the public eye. Co-appearances in videos indicate that Chechen and Ingushetian leaders, unlike their Dagestani counterparts, were still able to meet. Makhauri's statement suggests that private channels to Syrian rebels, by contrast, are not reliable (Makhauri, 2015a).

The general leadership, however, continued to address an audience beyond those directly involved in the insurgency. The appeal to security service personnel to quit their

jobs continued to admit the possibility of crossing boundaries, of moving from “them” to “us” — their status as enemies was conditional on them continuing to perform their current roles (Kavazcenter, 2013b). The leadership claimed that “every Muslim should do everything that he can, so that the infidels see not our weakness, but our strength, so that they fear Muslims and do not feel themselves to be safe” (Hunafa, 2013). The leadership also reposted advice from its Shari’ah Committee in August 2011 to Caucasian Muslims living in Europe regarding the correct forms of zakat at the end of Ramadan, insisting that — since the jihad was “defensive” and participation in it was mandatory — people had an obligation to seek out the families of mujahideen, martyrs, and imprisoned mujahideen and provide support to them. It also insisted that people had broader obligations to provide means to the insurgent leadership (Hunafa, 2014). Despite this general outward orientation, however, even the general leadership did not offer any explanation of the decision to pledge allegiance to IS. Indeed, there were no general leadership statements subsequent to Makhauri’s pledges of allegiance. A key factor explaining this silence was that Hunafa, the “official” website for the sector, was not in agreement with the decision, and therefore not in a position to justify it (Youngman, 2016).

Mobilizing Structures

Phase One: Dividing Leadership Responsibilities

Taziyev, like Astemirov, was dual hatted within the IK leadership, simultaneously occupying the post of vilayyat emir and overall IK military emir. He was also similarly long-serving as leader: Having been appointed Caucasus Front commander in September

2006, he led the Glalglayche Vilayyat until his arrest, reported in mid-2010.²² This is where the comparisons with Astemirov end. Whereas Astemirov was a charismatic figure and prolific communicator who could draw on his educational and social capital, Taziyev was a former policeman who stayed away from the limelight and did not actively seek to shape the meanings of the conflict he was involved in, at least at the rhetorical level. He could claim substantial credibility as a result of his insurgent career: Having joined in 1998/1999, after first allegedly being kidnapped by insurgents, he was a close ally of Basayev, facilitated the 2004 Nazran attacks, and played a key role in unifying the various combat jama'ats in the republic under a unified leadership (Kommersant, 2013a; Campana and Ratelle, 2014:127). The role of personal networks can also not be discounted: in its early years, the Ingushetian insurgency boasted numerous former policemen among its ranks, at least some of whom Taziyev allegedly knew from his pre-insurgency profession (Kommersant, 2008a). Yet, whatever influence Taziyev could boast, he did not exert leadership through rhetoric, and he had little directly observable impact on the ideological direction of the insurgency. His “intellectual world,” consequently, is a barren place, featuring only three Qur'anic figures as Taziyev extolled the virtues of sacrifice for Eid al-Adha. What his leadership points to, in ideological terms, is how certain types of leaders can delegate responsibility for the performance of certain tasks, such as setting movement priorities, to others within the movement.

One of the key individuals to whom he delegated such responsibility was Tikhomirov. Born in 1982 in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, to a Russian mother and Kazakh-Buryat father, Tikhomirov reportedly converted to Islam in his teens and studied intermittently at various religious institutes in Russia — several of which were closed down for alleged extremist

²² The actual arrest may have taken place several months earlier.

activity — and later Egypt and Kuwait (Garayev, 2017). In the mid-2000s, he worked as an Arabic translator for Islamic media outlets associated with Salafism in Moscow, and started to publish video sermons and lectures (Garayev, 2017). Tikhomirov claimed to have joined the insurgency in 2007 or 2008 (his communiqués are ambiguous as to what year he is referring to), after Umarov and the leader of the IK's foreign fighters, Muhannad, corresponded with him, citing his influence as a preacher and calling on him to join the jihad (Tikhomirov, 2008b, 2009a). Although he did not have any official position within the movement, he was closely linked to Umarov, appearing alongside him in several videos. Moreover, he was the only regional leader to enjoy a media profile — both insurgent and mainstream — on a par with Astemirov. Indeed, Memorial claimed that, in their final years, Tikhomirov surpassed Astemirov in popularity (Memorial, 2013). Even after his death in a special operation in Ekazhevo in March 2010, his statements routinely feature in the court reporting relating to seized extremist material.²³ In many ways, Tikhomirov had much in common with another hugely influential jihadist ideologist, AQ's Anwar al-Awlaki, whose statements similarly feature routinely in the collections of those arrested for terrorism offences (Holbrook, 2017). He was thus highly active in trying to shape perceptions of the conflict.

Tikhomirov's framing provides important insights into how individual biographies can shape interpretations of ideology. Indeed, he drew heavily on his own journey to the insurgency in crafting his narrative, in particular using the doubts that he claimed to have felt to dismiss those of prospective audiences. Equally central to his portrayal, however,

²³ Two Bashkortostan natives who appeared before the rehabilitation commissions in Dagestan, for example, referenced Tikhomirov's statements in explaining their decision to join the insurgency (Chernovik, 2011a). The International Crisis Group, too, claimed there was evidence of his influence on jihadists in Central Asia, and cited a local mufti as claiming it took him hours to persuade people that Buryatskiy's interpretation, drawing on simplicity and emotion, was wrong (International Crisis Group, 2012).

was not his own biography, but that of Umarov — a key figure within Tikhomirov’s intellectual world, featuring in four of eight communiqués. Tikhomirov extols Umarov’s virtues in considerable detail, emphasizing the correctness of his decisions, his sincerity and humility, and his personal sacrifices for the struggle (Tikhomirov, 2009a). In Tikhomirov’s statements, we can see the development of a form of ethos-by-proxy, where the speaker establishes the credibility of an individual with whom he is closely associated — and therefore of himself through that association (Moore, Copeland and Youngman, forthcoming).

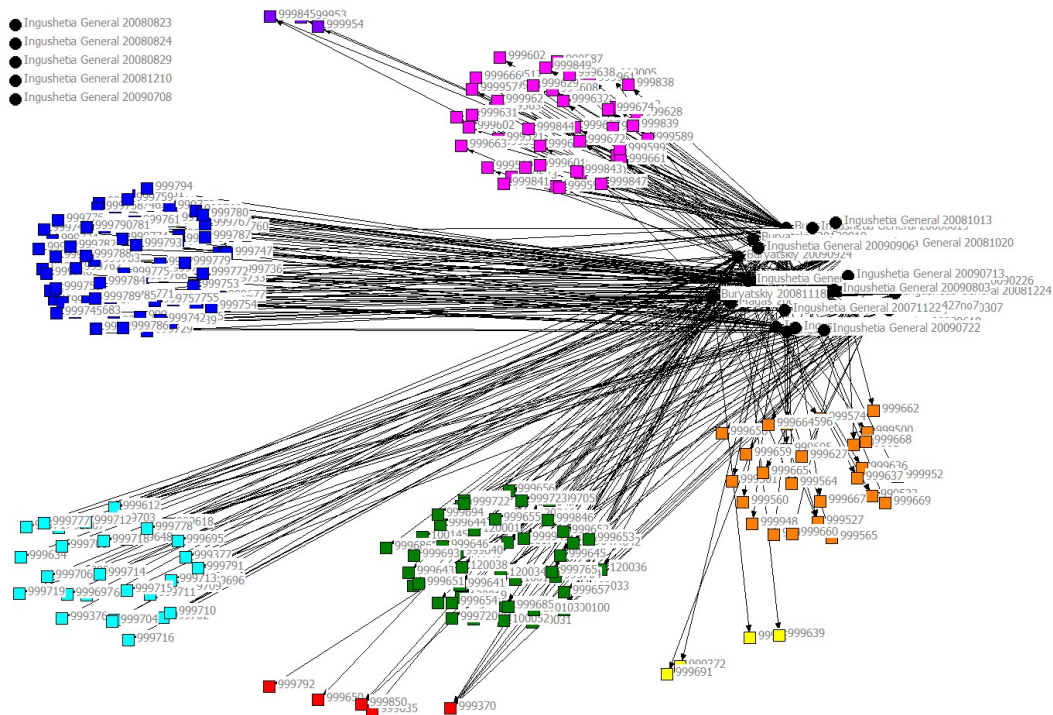


Figure 27. *The intellectual world of Ingushetian leaders – Phase one.* Green = insurgent actors, blue = Ingushetian, red = Russian, orange = Qur’anic, pink = scholarly, yellow = historical, turquoise = regional, purple = global. Black nodes are the communiqués. Excluded from the visualization are 98 local security service officers listed as “volunteers” for death and a large number of scholars listed by Tikhomirov in his anti-Shi’a tract. The overall networks were therefore even more heavily oriented towards the local and scholarly categories.

We also see that, although Tikhomirov was located with the Ingushetian sector of the insurgency, his framing did not prioritize Ingushetian grievances or actors. Rather, he subordinated them to a Chechen-centric narrative that endeavoured to speak to the broader

region, rather than just one particular community. Even excluding his lengthy tract on the Shi'a, in which he drew on a broad array of Islamic scholars, he referenced 118 individuals, an average of 14.75 per communiqué. This made his intellectual world the most diverse of all the leaders considered, even if only ten of these individuals featured more than once. Within this world, Putin and Kadyrov were prominent figures, featuring in three and four communiqués respectively. “Kafyrov,” for example, was denigrated as “worse than any animal,” and placed in a pantheon of historical anti-heroes such as Yermolov and General Troshev (Tikhomirov, 2008b). By contrast, Ingushetian President Murat Zyazikov did not feature, and Yunus-bek Yevkurov appeared only twice — briefly, in the context of refusing to hand over the bodies of killed insurgents, and again in his posthumously published private letters in the context of the attempt to kill him in June 2009 (Tikhomirov, 2009b, 2010a). Beyond the senior-most leaders in each republic, moreover, only one Ingushetian security service official was mentioned by name. Of 34 insurgents mentioned by name — the second-largest category of references — those that were identifiable Chechen exceeded those who were definitely Ingushetian. His intellectual world reflected his personal perceptions of the conflict that he was joining, one that was driven by a Chechnya-based leadership that he had personally corresponded and continued to be extensively engaged with. It was, however, scholars who were most prominently represented in his network, with 47 individuals appearing. Most prominent were the hadith compilers Muslim and Al-Bukhari, as well as Abdullah ibn Masud, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, who appears twice in identical circumstances in support of the argument that those who remain silent in certain situations can never achieve the highest level of faith (Tikhomirov, 2008a, 2009a). Tikhomirov’s intellectual world reflected both his outsider status and his efforts to establish his own ethos as an Islamic preacher, with the hadith and opinions of numerous

scholars corralled in support of his calls for action. His in-depth engagement with the ideas of Rinat Abu Mukhammad and Gamet Suleymanov, moreover, lend credence to Garaev's (2017) claim that he needs to be understood in the context of post-Soviet Islamic discourses — both being potential rivals within the Russian-speaking Salafi community.

Equally important, Buryatskiy did not seek to activate Ingushetian identity boundaries, because they were not his to activate. This may seem an obvious point: Why, after all, would someone who is Muslim but not Ingushetian concentrate their attention on an Ingushetian rather than a broader Muslim identity? Yet, given his location and operational involvement with specifically Ingushetian actors, they represented one of his key target audiences. Buryatskiy's statements instead illustrate how personal as well as audience identities shape appeals. Indeed, we see in Buryatskiy's diatribe against the Shi'a (Tikhomirov, 2012), in which he sought to highlight their many supposed errors and failings, how an adopted identity can manifest itself in ideological focus. Neither Ingushetia nor Chechnya have major Shi'a communities, and therefore Shi'ism, unlike Sufism, was of minimal relevance to Buryatskiy's lived reality or target audiences in those two republics. It is, however, a major area of debate among both Salafi communities in Dagestan, where there are significant Shi'a communities, and within global jihadist narratives. Tikhomirov's decision to dedicate a pamphlet to them therefore arguably reflected his own immersion in jihadist debates more than it did the concerns of the communities he predominantly worked with.

The intellectual world of general leadership communiqués displayed a similar preference to Tikhomirov's for breadth rather than depth, referencing 127 individuals, an average of 6.8 per statement, but with only 12 appearing more than once. Where it contrasted sharply, however, was in its concentration predominantly on Ingushetian actors.

Of 20 insurgents mentioned, the only ones definitely outside of the republic to be mentioned were Umarov, Maskhadov, and Sadulayev — in the context of the claimed historic legitimacy of the decision to proclaim the IK — and Dagestani emir Malachiyev — in the context of his “martyrdom.” The largest category of people to be mentioned — accounting for 96 people — were those in Ingushetia who were not part of the insurgency, compared to a mere five individuals in Chechnya. Many of those Ingushetian individuals were security service employees and other officials, referenced either in the context of attacks on them or their alleged crimes, with alleged informers and the victims of security service abuses also contributing to the total. It was Zyazikov, however, who was the dominant figure within the network, featuring in five of nineteen statements. By contrast, a mere six scholars, mostly compilers of hadith, featured. The general leadership was far more concerned than Buryatskiy with the political and day-to-day realities of the republic.

Phase Two: Shying Away From the Limelight

There is remarkably little biographical information in the public domain about any of the three individuals who were active in the leadership in this phase, and their low profile hinders our ability to consider their impact on the ideology of the insurgency. Media reporting on Mutaliyev’s death in Nazran in May 2013, for example, drew exclusively on security service information and referenced only his ascension to the leadership and the multiple crimes he was accused of, not his personal background or movement into the insurgency. Further complicating matters, there was more than one Dzhamaleyl Mutaliyev active in the insurgency at that time (Kommersant, 2012d; Kommersant 2013b). Gatagazhev was born in 1975 and lived in Sagopshi, Malgobekskiy Rayon. The most interesting fact about his biography is that he was detained in 2009 alongside a friend

suspected, and later convicted, of involvement in the insurgency (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009a). He reportedly joined the insurgency the same year and enjoyed a relatively rapid rise in the leadership, heading the Malgobekskiy Sector already in 2010 and then the overall vilayyat leadership. Such a rapid ascension points to the limited depths of the vilayyat's cadres, and to the ease with which individuals could acquire the rank of "emir." The identity of Qadi Abu Dudzhana, meanwhile, remains unclear, with several individuals identified as possible candidates — including another of Dzhamaleyl Mutaliyev. Reporting on his death in January 2012, the general leadership claimed that he had "received an Islamic education in an Arab country," and had returned to the North Caucasus on the orders of the leadership, despite being on an official wanted list. It also claimed that he had been an active player in resolving the leadership dispute at the highest levels of the IK, but did not reveal his identity (Kavkazcenter, 2012a).

In these circumstances, we cannot talk of charismatic leadership, nor consider the role of educational capital. Indeed, we are largely left to consider the significance of a depersonalized leadership, in which it is unclear at any given moment who is actually leading the insurgency. Even when individuals spoke, their identity was largely concealed and even their nom-de-guerres were rendered irregularly.²⁴ Operational security concerns clearly trumped the importance of establishing personal authority and credentials. If the insurgency advertized itself, it was predominantly through action rather than speech. Consideration of mobilizing structures therefore suggests that Campana and Ratelle's (2014:127) claim that Taziyev's arrest "disorganized the Ingush insurgency and revived the tensions between groups defending different agendas" is too strong, given that we cannot

²⁴ It thus difficult initially to confirm that Gatagazhev and "Ubaydullakh" were the same person, and that the two statements produced by Ingushetian qadis were also produced by a single individual

clearly identify distinct groups and agendas at this time.

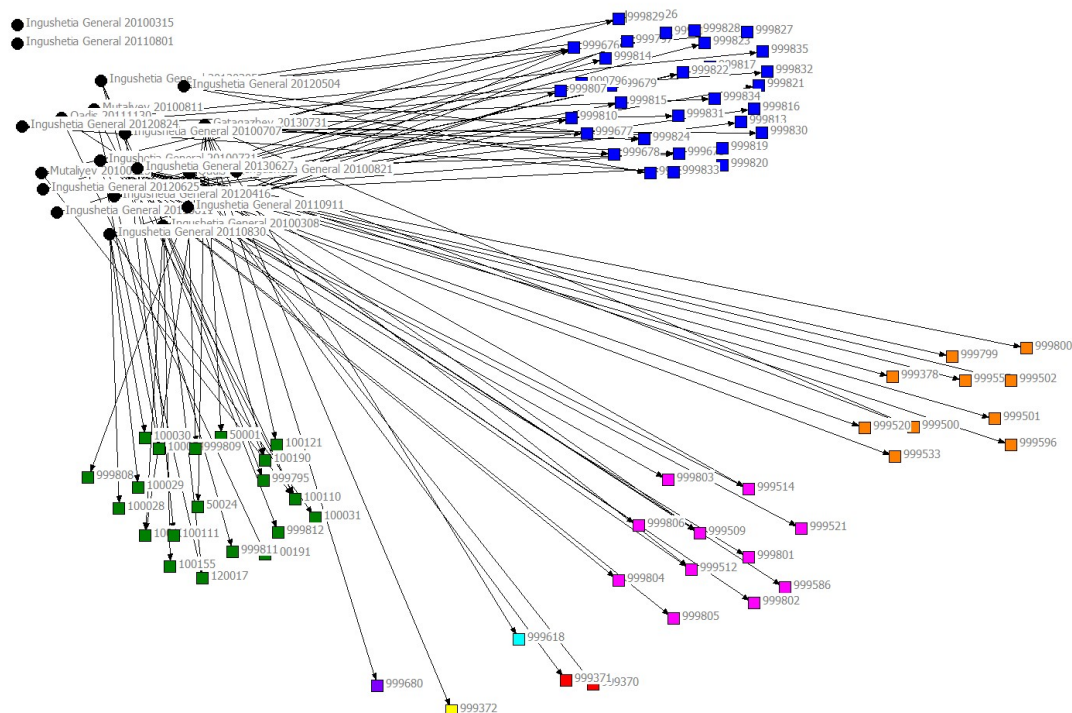


Figure 28. *The intellectual world of Ingushetian leaders – Phase two. Green = insurgent actors, blue = Ingushetian, red = Russian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly, yellow = historical, turquoise = regional, purple = global. Black nodes are the communiqués.*

The intellectual world of the insurgency contracted in both breadth and the types of people referenced. In statements by the three identified leaders and those of the general leadership, a total of 79 individuals were referenced, an average of 3.9 per communiqué. Of these, the majority fall within two categories. First, 22 members of the insurgency were mentioned, of which only four — Supyan Abdullayev, Umarov, Astemirov, and Mukhozhev — were outside the republic. The intra-insurgency focus remained on the situation in Ingushetia itself, in particular with regards to individuals killed fighting for it. Second, 33 non-insurgent actors within Ingushetia were mentioned. Other than Presidents Zyazikov and Yevkurov, the majority of these were either individuals who had reportedly been killed by the security services, and were mentioned in the context of the leadership's grievance narrative, or they were alleged spies who had informed on the insurgency for the

authorities. Indeed, the only figure who could be seen as central to the intellectual world of the insurgents at this time was Timur Arselgov, who featured in three communiqués (Kavkazcenter, 2010d; Hunafa, 2011; Mutaliyev, 2010b). The leadership accused Arselgov of being an agent of the security services who had been infiltrated into the insurgent ranks and was responsible for various “provocations,” including killing religious leaders. It also blamed him for Taziyev’s detention. By contrast, no regional non-insurgent actors were mentioned at all; Putin and Medvedev were the only Russian actors referenced; and Anwar al-Awlaki was the only actor outside of Russia’s borders to feature.

Phase Three: Barely an Intellectual World to Talk of

As in the second phase, limited meaningful information is available on the leadership in this phase. Gatagazhev survived only until May 2014, when he was killed in a special operation in Sagopshi. His successor, Makhauri, was born in 1988 in Novosibirsk Oblast, but when he returned to Ingushetia is unclear; he reportedly joined the insurgency in 2009 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2015a), and like Gatagazhev appears to have enjoyed a relatively rapid rise through insurgent ranks. In July 2013, he married Khadishat Albakova, who also joined the insurgency; Albakova was detained in December 2014 in a special operation targeting Makhauri and sentenced to three years for membership of the insurgency the following year (Memorial, 2015b). Indicating the close operational links with the Chechen insurgency, he also reportedly controlled fighters in Chechnya’s Sunzhenskiy Rayon (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2015a). Beyond this, there is little open source biographical data, and most of the reporting relates to accusations of involvement in particular attacks.

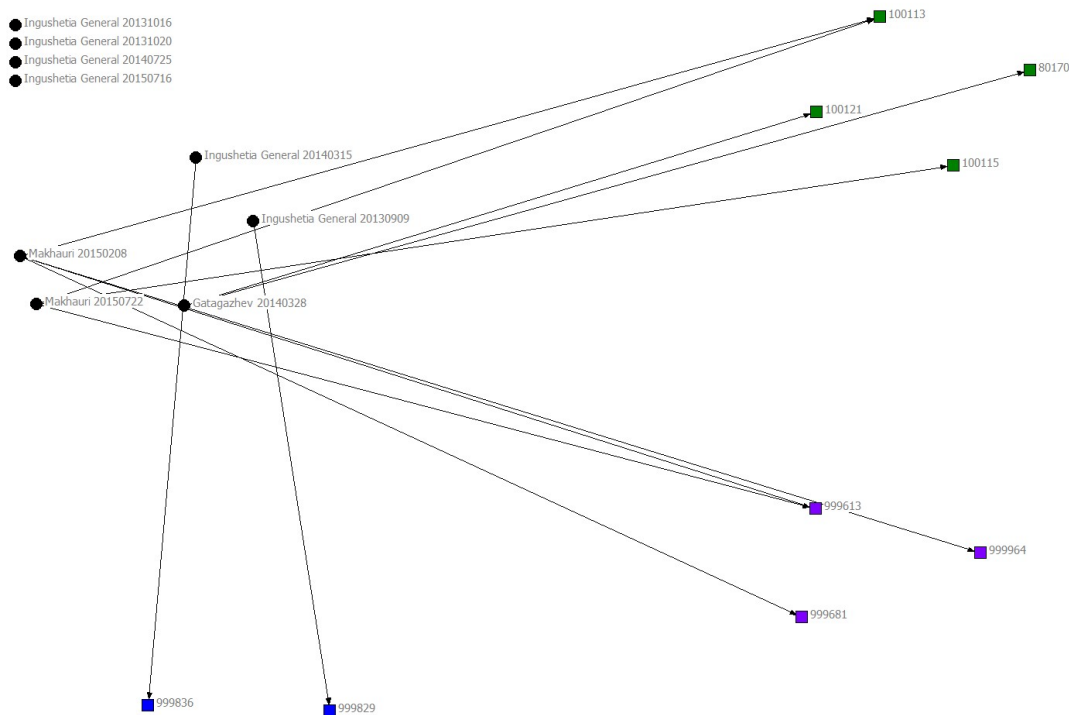


Figure 29 The intellectual world of Ingushetian leaders – Phase three. Green = insurgent actors, blue = Ingushetian, purple = global. Black nodes are the communiqués.

In this phase, the intellectual world is similarly uninformative; indeed, to describe it as a world would imply significantly more substance than it in fact possessed. A grand total of nine individuals, including Gatagazhev and Makhauri themselves, are mentioned within communiqués for this phase. Other insurgents mentioned are Aliaskhab Kebekov, in the context of Gatagazhev pledging allegiance to him after assuming the leadership after Umarov’s death; and Makhauri’s subordinate, Malgobekskiy Sector emir Abdul-Rakhim. We also see three global actors mentioned: al-Baghdadi, again in the context of a pledge of allegiance, this time from Makhauri; and Batirashvili and Atabiyev. The only other individuals mentioned are Ingushetian Security Council Akhmed Kotiyev and a local police employee. The insurgency was almost entirely focused inwards, and not rooting its statements in the broader debates happening within the North Caucasus insurgency.

Political Opportunities

Phase One: From State Collapse to Constructive Engagement

Grievances featured prominently in the statements of the general insurgent leadership, and, at the start of phase one, they had good reason to. The dying days of Zyazikov's presidency (2002-2008) were marked by the almost complete breakdown of law and order in the republic. Summer 2007 witnessed an increase in insurgent violence and the collapse of relations between the authorities and civil society, with interactions between human rights and state actors almost exclusively negative throughout the year. The human rights organization Mashr (Peace) had been founded in 2004 by Magomed Mutsolgov with the aim of documenting the abductions and human rights violations that had become commonplace in the republic, providing legal support to citizens, and spreading human rights and international norms (Kavkazskiy Uzel 2007c, 2011f). Through 2007, however, Mutsolgov claimed the organization was under constant pressure, including repeated inspections of its tax and financial records, exclusion from federal grant lists, and pressure on its members (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2007c, 2012g; Memorial, 2007b, 2007c). Although most of the specific incidents occurred before the start of the period of study, they contributed to the environment in which the IK was born. Within the relevant period, pressure on human rights activists translated into direct physical threats. In November 2007, Oleg Orlov and a REN TV film crew were abducted from their hotel in Nazran, with Orlov assaulted in the process. The removal of hotel security prior to the incident and the fact that the abductees were transported through multiple checkpoints without being stopped pointed to security service involvement. Orlov himself claimed that the abduction was an effort to intimidate journalists and human rights activists working in the republic (Memorial, 2008).

Physical intimidation of human rights activists continued into 2008. In January, two Memorial employees were detained and beaten when they attended a rally in Nazran (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008b). Russian human rights ombudsman Vladimir Lukin called for an investigation into the decision to declare a counterterrorist operation (KTO) ahead of the rally (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008c), highlighting how the authorities could exploit the threat posed by the insurgency to clamp down on civil dissent. Pressure on Mashr also continued. In March, a former employee and relative of Mutsolgov was killed in a KTO; Mutsolgov claimed the FSB had circulated information about his relative's former links to Mashr in a deliberate attempt to exacerbate the situation (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008e). In July, an editor for the organization's website was kidnapped and beaten, with the security services again suspected of involvement (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009k). In August, unknown people opened fire on Mutsolgov in Karabulak, leading Mutsolgov to suggest a new campaign of pressure against him might be about to start (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008m). Overall, the combination of physical attacks and a lack of positive engagements make it impossible to talk of meaningful political opportunities towards the end of the Zyazikov regime. Indeed, of all the phases across all three republics, this phase in Ingushetia represented the nadir of relations between local authorities and human rights actors.

Given the dire state of relations between civil society and the authorities under Zyazikov, it is little surprise that Yunus-bek Yevkurov's ascendancy to the presidency (31 October 2008-date) was broadly welcomed. As far as human rights actors were concerned, it heralded an opportunity for constructive engagement characterized by its absence under Zyazikov. In November 2008, at a three-hour meeting with various civil society representatives, Yevkurov agreed with many of the concerns raised by human rights activists and proposed the creation of a presidential commission to monitor and respond to

violations and disappearances (Kavkazskiy Uzel 2008p, 2008q). At least four activists, including Mutsolgov, were offered places on the commission (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008t). Separately, Yevkurov met with Moscow human rights activists and promised to investigate alleged abductions and killings by the security services (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009b), and he promised to help the development of civil society (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009b). Yevkurov also appointed Musa Pliyev, a human rights activist and lawyer who represented the family of killed opposition leader Magomed Yevloyev, as a presidential advisor (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008r). Pliyev, in turn, announced the creation of a hotline to report security service abuses, in a bid to increase accountability (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2008s). The presidential press service promised to study Mashr's annual report, declaring the organization's information to be generally reliable (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009g), and in April 2009 officials entertained a Council of Europe delegation and invited Memorial to attend its meeting with the presidential administration (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009g).

Yevkurov's presidency therefore commenced with a number of public initiatives intended to advertize a new, constructive attitude on the part of the authorities towards civil society. At the same time, these positive signals were offset by ongoing negative practices by the security services. This suggested elite divisions over the merits of engagement with the human rights community, and therefore limits to the political opportunities available to actors. Indeed, it was the behaviour of the security services that was the very subject of the human rights activists' positive engagement with the authorities. In December 2008, security services carried out an unsanctioned search of a Mashr employee's house (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009h), with further searches and claims of persecution throughout the year (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009h). Mutsolgov terminated his involvement in the presidential commission already in February 2009, in protest at the ongoing torture, abductions and

killings in the republic (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2009d). Several notable incidents of violence also marked the second part of this phase. Chechen human rights activist Natalya Estemirova was kidnapped in Groznyy and found dead in Ingushetia in July (Chernovik, 2009c). Human rights activist, businessman and opposition leader Maksharip Aushev, meanwhile was shot in Kabardino-Balkaria in October (Gazeta Yuga, 2009). This demonstrates how events in one republic had a tendency to spill over into neighbouring ones.

Phase Two: Divided Elites and Negative Tendencies

Positive interactions between the republican authorities and human rights actors continued into the second phase. In October 2010, Ingushetia's human rights ombudsman introduced legislation introducing administrative responsibility for obstructing his organization's activities and not responding in a timely manner to official enquiries (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010h). When an Ingushetian website published an anonymous letter claiming Mutsolgov's life was in danger from Yevkurov, Mutsolgov himself questioned its authenticity, describing Yevkurov as the most accessible president Ingushetia had had (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010g). Indicative of this new approachability, Yevkurov — like Magomedov in Dagestan — gave a lengthy interview to Kavkazskiy Uzel Chief Editor Grigoriy Shvedov (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011h). In September, Yevkurov took arguably the most substantive step of his tenure to date, establishing an Ingushetian version of the rehabilitation commission, having invited officials from Dagestan to share their experience. This was a more sincere effort than that seen in Kabardino-Balkaria. In February 2012, Yevkurov signalled his support for the human rights community by attending the first Caucasus Forum of Human Rights Activists — the only republican leader to attend such a

forum organized in their republic (Chernovik, 2012).

At the same time, distinct limitations to this engagement remain. In January 2010, for example, Yevkurov ignored an appeal by NGOs and Moscow human rights activists to appoint Mutsolgov as human rights ombudsman (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2010b). When Yevkurov created an Ingushetian Public Chamber in May 2011, no human rights activists appear to have been offered a place (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011g). Instead, preference was given to non-political actors, as well as officials — something Mutsolgov claimed was in violation of the law (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011g). The rehabilitation commission, too, demonstrated many of the flaws of its counterparts, being heavily dominated by the security services and lacking a strong civil society preference. Thus, greater accessibility to those in power rarely appears to have translated into an ability to influence its exercise, and there remained a preference for ad hoc forums for engagement rather than institutionalized processes involving actors who could retain their independence.

There were also a number of negative developments, including continued security service pressure, harassment of human rights actors, and a general cooling of relations between the authorities and civil society actors as time went by. A Mashr employee's home was searched in March 2011 (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2011d), while another was detained in February 2012 and accused of possessing extremist literature. Both Memorial and Amnesty International registered protests in the latter case, amid allegations of physical abuse (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012e; Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012f). In March, a founding member of Mashr who had earlier been forced to quit the organization was killed, with reports simultaneously linking him to the insurgency and noting his previous ties to Mashr. Mutsolgov again viewed this as an attempt to discredit the organization (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012g). The same month, both the Coordinating Council of Ingushetia's Nongovernmental

Organizations and the opposition Mekhk-Kkhel alleged there was a regional campaign to discredit both Mashr and Mutsolgov (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012h, 2012i). In October, the Ingushetian branch of the FSB reported that 20 NGOs accused of cooperating with foreign intelligence had been closed down in the republic, but three organizations, including Mashr, falling under the foreign agent register were still operating (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012j). The local Justice Ministry, however, reported the same month that five NGOs had been liquidated since the start of the year, and could not confirm the FSB figures (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2012k). As in phase one, there was evidence of competition, or at the least a lack of coordination, within the elite. In January 2013, an editor for human rights magazine Dosh alleged that the authorities had ordered several editions of the publication removed from sale (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2013c). In July, Mutsolgov appealed directly to Putin, alleging that the Ingushetian authorities were spreading disinformation about Mashr's activities and seeking to pressure the organization (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2013g). Demonstrating the gulf in understandings and divergence of agendas between the Ingushetian authorities and human rights actors, Yevkurov criticized Mashr's annual report for negatively influencing young people — without disputing the accuracy of the information provided (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2013h). At the same time, a new trend emerged that also had the potential to negatively impact perceptions of political opportunities: In summer 2013 a conflict developed around the Nasyr-Kortovskiy mosque, where Chumakov had preached since 2008. This led to several incidents where security services were reported to have surrounded the mosque (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2013b, 2015d) — although events did not reach anywhere near the scale of those in Dagestan. These developments contrasted sharply with the situation in May 2009, when Yevkurov has hosted the first open dialogue between representatives of the various religious trends active in the republic (Memorial, 2015c).

Phase Three: Cooling Relations

The third phase did not witness a significant shift in the perceived political opportunities available to human rights actors. Instead, there was further evidence of a cooling of relations with the authorities, characterized by the absence of significant developments. When a social media post alleged in April 2014 that the authorities were planning to assassinate Mutsolgov, the Ingushetian Security Council Secretary came out in his support, praising his work as beneficial to the authorities (Kavkazskiy Uzel, 2014e). This, however, was the extent of engagements. On the other hand, nor were there significant negative developments in relations or, relatedly, the broader security situation. By mid-2015, human rights reports are again noting that the republic “in recent years became one of the most peaceful and stable regions of the North Caucasus,” drawing a clear contrast with the start of the study period (Memorial, 2015c). Where negative developments continued was in the ongoing conflictual relations between the official muftiate and the Nasyr-Kortskiy mosque. In mid-2015, Chumakov declared collective mid-day prayers to be non-obligatory and declined to lead them. The muftiate subsequently called for Chumakov’s removal, leading to a conflict over leadership of the mosque that was only temporarily resolved within the study period with the direct intervention of Yevkurov (Memorial, 2015c).

Framing Political Opportunities

We can see such early negative relations reflected in two statements in particular issued by the Ingushetian rebel leadership, which sought to demonstrate the impossibility of achieving legal redress for wrongs. In the first, the leadership claimed that reports of abductions and murders were met with formulaic responses and “not one case of the

abductions and executions of Muslims has been solved, although the evidence and facts in individual cases are of an enormous quantity.” Drawing parallels with events elsewhere in the region, it claimed this was evidence of the “entire infidel system.” Although it admitted that a protest against the abduction of two Muslims in September 2007 had achieved partial success in securing their release and an admission of blame from the authorities, it insisted that peaceful protests would not “drive the infidels from the Caucasus,” since they only understood “the language of force.” Instead, it claimed that “changing one acting puppet for another” would likely trigger a fresh wave of repressions (Kavkazcenter, 2010a). In the second statement, reports of Ingush abducted in Moscow are cited as evidence of the impossibility of escape, and the leadership criticizes the opposition in the republic for trying to use “popular protest” against abductions for its own ends. Again, it claimed that the replacement of one president with another would do nothing to improve the situation for true Muslims (Hunafa, 2008b). Thus, there was a concentrated effort to discredit the alternatives that the lack of political opportunities supposedly gave rise to.

The changing political opportunities and their limitations under Yevkurov, by contrast, found no reflection in the statements of the general rebel leadership. They did not argue, as might have been expected, that these new opportunities were superficial and did not change the fundamental nature of the system. Rather, they did not address them at all. Statements focused predominantly on justifying individual acts of violence and the behaviour of the insurgency, often through reference to the supposed crimes perpetrated by targets of attacks. Yet there was no discussion of the political situation at all, and a reader would not be able to gauge that anything had changed from communiqués. Indeed, it was July 2009 before Yevkurov was even mentioned, in a passing reference to how a murdered senior security official had been dismissed by him and had thus become complacent about his

security (Kavkazcenter, 2009c). In September, it referenced a meeting hosted by Yevkurov with officials from the muftiate and representatives of civil society, in which Yevkurov encouraged people to inform on suspected insurgents and suspicious vehicles (Kavkazcenter, 2009h). This, however, was a response to an initiative that posed a direct threat to the insurgency, rather than a response to political opportunities per se. The closest the general leadership came to responding to the significant political developments that marked this phase was issuing a statement denying involvement in Estemirova's death, saying that Memorial "is not conducting anti-Islamic activity" and pinning the blame on Kadyrov (Kavkazcenter, 2009f).

As in the second half of the first phase, there was remarkably little engagement with the political situation in the second phase — either from a positive or negative perspective. Mutaliyev and Abu Dudzhana did not react to any official policies, save for rejecting the significance of the federal authorities' decision to designate the IK a terrorist organization and discussing the situation around Chumakov. The general leadership were similarly neglectful of political developments. Gatagazhev, however, drew a parallel between the official attitude towards Chumakov and their earlier treatment of opposition leader Magomed Yevloyev. He used this to once again reject the significance of changing presidents, implying that the disposability of such figures had allowed the Kremlin to dispose of an inconvenient figure. He went on to claim that some Ingush were naive in expecting significant change under Yevkurov, speculating that instability would start to grow and "Yevkurov's days as president are very likely numbered" (Gatagazhev, 2013). Such depictions fitted within a cross-insurgency tendency to portray the republican leaders as nothing more than puppets, which the Kremlin could dispose of once they had served their purpose. This, however, amounted to the sole direct engagement with political

opportunities throughout the phase. Notable in the absent framing was any engagement with the ideas of the rehabilitation commissions — something that might have been expected to garner some kind of response, given that their purpose was to undermine the insurgency's support base.

Interpreting Ideological Change in Ingushetia

Of the three cases examined in this study, Ingushetia in many ways represents the most challenging. Existing literature is of only limited use in helping us understand its specific origins, and a key question that emerges is the degree to which it can be considered a case distinct from that of Chechnya. And yet the leadership of the vilayyat in the first phase only provides us with very partial answers. Taziyeu was, from the perspective of articulating ideology and shaping media, an insignificant figure, and the main lessons that we can draw from his tenure is how ideological authority can be delegated to other individuals. The person to whom he delegated this authority, Tikhomirov, by contrast, did not have any formal position and was an outsider who was closely linked to the senior Chechen leadership, as his biography and intellectual world clearly demonstrate. Yet Tikhomirov was a charismatic figure, and a significant factor in his popularity may well have been his distinct style: Rather than communiqués resembling political statements or news reports like those found elsewhere in the IK leadership, he preferred a narrative, story-telling style that was deeply personal. In reading his justifications of violence, it is easy to forget that there was actual violence involved, such was the abstract nature of the discussion; his was a heroic tale of good versus evil, not an accounting for specific acts. Equally important, it is precisely his status as an outsider that provides us with some of the clearest insights into how personal biographies can shape ideological positioning. He focused on a conflict

rooted in Chechnya and placed within the narrative of Chechnya's struggle against Russia, rather than focusing on Ingushetian political realities, because this was the struggle that he had decided to join. He notably did not trigger local identity boundaries, because they were not his to evoke. Thus we see in his statements how framing is as affected by the identity of the speaker as the supposed characteristics of the audience, something that is less obvious in other cases where such identity is shared by both.

In Ingushetia, there was also the persistence of distinctly local grievance narratives and identities, most notably with regard to the Ossetians. This was evident in the first phase, but became particularly prominent under the leadership of Mutaliyev. Framing in this period provides evidence not so much of local agendas displacing regional ones — because, throughout, there was notably limited in-depth focus on regional issues — but how supposedly global narratives can integrate these local agendas and reconfigure existing identity boundaries. Under Mutaliyev and again Gatagazhev, there were efforts to address potential rivals for support, represented by Chumakov, not through diagnostic or prognostic framing contestation, but through portrayals of the opponent's vulnerability to a supposedly common enemy. Once again, however, it was an insurgency that was overwhelmingly concerned with its local affairs, paying precious little attention to events elsewhere. As in Dagestan, even with the supposed globalization of agendas, Makhauri undertakes remarkably little explanatory work and displays no additional concern with events elsewhere. It was, again, an insurgency turning inwards. Yet, in considering Ingushetia, we are often left to reflect on the challenges posed by an anonymous, even absent leadership. Much of the time, individual leaders were silent and, where they did speak, they concealed their identity; often it was hard to be sure who was leading the republic at any given time. We have remarkably little information on the biographies of those leaders, and therefore

cannot draw meaningful conclusions about how those biographies may have influenced framing. Much of the communicative burden was borne by the websites, but these were likely extra-territorial. Of all the IK's sectors, individual Ingusehtian leaders demonstrated the least concern with shaping meaning through statements.

Part Three:

Contextualizing

Ideological Variance

and Change

Chapter Seven

Interpreting Ideological Variance and Change

Introduction

The previous three chapters have explored in-depth, on a case-by-case basis, the ideology articulated by the insurgent leadership, and the context in which that ideology circulated. This chapter now turns to the task of drawing out the commonalities that existed between the cases and attempting to answer the case-specific questions set out in chapter three. In answering the first sub-question, it will seek to establish the extent of variance and change in the ideology articulated by the North Caucasus insurgent leadership across the three republics and between 2007 and 2015. The answers to this question will contribute to our understanding of the second and third sub-questions: How do insurgent leaders adapt jihadist ideas and ideologies to local audiences and contexts? To what degree can we consider the IK a unified movement, and what constitutes and shapes the identity of that movement? This examination of ideological content will then enable use to examine the significance of this variance and change in content in relation to internal and external factors, the fourth sub-question, and consolidate the answers to the second and third sub-questions.

In order to address these issues, this chapter will follow the broad structure adopted in the previous chapters. The first section will orient the discussion of movement ideology by emphasizing that, although the significance of regional leadership framing should not be exaggerated, it plays an important role in the overall life of the movement. The second

section will examine movement across its various dimensions. It will show how grievance narratives were highly localized and became progressively less developed over time as leaders took for granted the need to explain what the insurgency was seeking to change. It will argue that insurgent leaders both lacked a clearly defined programme for change and displayed clear differences in their treatment of violence as a means of achieving it. Finally, it will highlight the centrality of Islamic identity and identify both how leaders accommodated ethnic identities and how specific mobilizing strategies were dependent on acceptance of this identity framing. The third section draws out general changes in the cadres responsible for articulating the ideology, illustrating how a general decline in intellectual capacity was reflected by the shrinking intellectual worlds of the leaders. The fourth section turns to political opportunities, highlighting how these were highly dependent on the preferences of particular leaders and limited by the lack of formal mechanisms and common understandings. The fifth section then examines how these factors interacted and argues that, in considering the IK, we are actually dealing with three interlinked insurgencies that can be classified as ideological shallow. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of how these findings contribute to our overall understanding of the IK as a movement.

Ideology in Perspective

In attempting to analyse how insurgent leaders in the three republics sought to position the movement ideologically, there is a danger of over-interpreting the results. Regional leaders were not the only insurgent voices. The central leadership offered its own assessment, and many of its claims obviously applied to the constituent parts of the IK. The “official” IK websites collectively pursued a number of rhetorical strategies, beyond

leadership statements, that were strongly rooted in local dynamics and portrayed “Muslims as systematically victimized by ‘infidels’” (Campana and Ducol, 2015:693). Moreover, territorial boundaries are more easily blurred online, and the importance of a broader “jihadist” movement culture should not be overlooked (Ramsay, 2013). Local insurgents could draw on narratives circulating among jihadist communities online. The prevalence or absence of particular interpretations may therefore be less significant when placed in this broader communicative context. Furthermore, statements by some leaders continued to circulate – or, indeed, were only released – posthumously meaning that a “local” perspective circulated after their demise.

Nevertheless, a guiding premise of this study is that leaders matter. They are often the people who come to symbolize a movement; they are the people that members look to for guidance and to respond to challenges; and they are by definition the movement’s privileged voices (Youngman and Moore, forthcoming). For any political movement, the opinions of members matter, but it is leaders who, one way or another, often drive the conversation. Moreover, local actors, including leaders, are crucial to making messages salient. Identity is constructed and negotiated through existing relationships and conceptions and is affected by “the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place” (Melucci, 1996:44-47). In order to account for existing relationships and conceptions, however, one needs to be aware of them, and it is local actors who are best positioned to understand them and translate global narratives to particular audiences. Finally, our very understanding of insurgency is based on physical action, and therefore an insurgent movement must have a physical manifestation for us to consider it as such. This being the case, there needs to be some kind of link between online discourse and the actors on the ground. Leaders often perform this bridging role, and so we now turn to the question

how leaders across the movement did precisely that.

Framing

Diagnostic Framing: Locally Focused and Progressively Weaker

Localized Grievances

With the notable exception of Astemirov, North Caucasian insurgent leaders neglected a broad, systemic critique that explained why a revolutionary replacement of the entire political structure, rather than a more gradualist reform was necessary. Such an argument was implicit, but it drew on identity framing, rather than a detailed analysis of the political system. A mid-range critique of social mores was more prevalent, particularly in the statements of Jama'at Shari'at, Magomed Suleymanov, and the Ingushetian leadership during the first phase. For the most part, however, these too were not translated into political problems requiring political solutions – they focused on symptoms, not structures, and were again heavily reliant on questions of identity.

In place of a comprehensive systemic analysis, insurgent leadership explanations of what they were seeking to change, and how they saw the status quo, were heavily oriented towards narratives of grievance. In other words, the diagnosis on offer was very much focused on the immediate, on the here-and-now. These diagnoses, moreover, were highly localized. Although they drew on broader narratives of the infidels waging a war against Islam, they concentrated on the grievances experienced within the individual republics, rather than the region as a whole or elsewhere in the world. Across the timespan of the IK, it was relatively rare – with the exception of Tikhomirov, who devoted as much attention to neighbouring Chechnya as to Ingushetia – for leaders in one republic to discuss events and

grievances in another.

Such a finding raises questions about the unity of the movement – a subject that will be explored in more detail below. Although we might expect local references to dominate, given that people naturally devote more attention to the issues that affect them directly, within a truly integrated movement it seems reasonable to expect at least major events affecting one part to resonate with others, and therefore to be mentioned by leaders. In reality, however, evidence of this is extremely limited. This is true even of a leader such as Astemirov, who articulated the most sophisticated ideological position of all the leaders examined, and who claimed for himself a regional leadership role. In his statements, we see him move beyond local events to adopt a bigger picture perspective, but this is achieved through abstraction – addressing the situation facing Muslims generally and identifying systemic problems – rather than by talking about specifics affecting other groups within the movement. If ideology offers a vision of how the world is, then audiences in one republic would have recognized their own world in only the most general of terms by looking at leadership statements originating from another republic. They would not encounter any discussion of specific grievances affecting their lives.

Distinct Conflict Narratives

The dominance of the local is also found in distinctions as to when insurgent leaders dated the start of the conflicts in which they were engaged. Jama'at Shari'at claimed that “the war [on Muslims] has been going on for eight years already” (Kavkazcenter, 2007d). This created a conflict narrative that presumably – based on the various references made to it – started with events in the Kadar Zone in 1998-1999 and the outbreak of the Second Chechen War. This was a much shorter time frame than the conflict narrative of the central

leadership and implicitly disassociated the Dagestani insurgency from the earlier Chechen struggle for independence. Astemirov, by contrast, framed his discussions in terms of the events in his republic in the early 2000s. The Ingushetian leadership, meanwhile, dated the start of the conflict to 2002, at which point “the situation changed drastically – Ingushetian cops started a war with Muslims” (Hunafa, 2008a). This, presumably, referred to the replacement of popular Ingushetian President Ruslan Aushev with Murat Zyazikov in December 2001 and the dawn of a regime widely associated with corruption and police brutality. Although we must be cautious about drawing conclusions about motivation from the public position adopted by the rebel leadership, the personal experiences of the first generation of rebel leadership in each republic influenced the way that leaders in those republics characterized the origins of their conflicts. The narratives of occupation stemming from these different starting points consequently also diverged, and although different leaderships all spoke of “occupation,” they understood its nature and history in different ways. Thus, what superficially appears to be a common narrative reveals highly localized dimensions when explored in detail.

Diminishing Diagnoses

These narratives of occupation disappeared over time. They were particularly strong in Astemirov’s statements, and clearly discernible in Ingushetian and Dagestani ones at the same time, but almost entirely absent in those issued in the later years of the IK. The same is true of the grievance narrative in general: as the years went by, it became less and less developed. The increased repression witnessed in the run-up to and aftermath of the Winter Olympics in Sochi are not reflected in the diagnoses offered by the Dagestani rebel leadership, and the Kabardino-Balkarian and Ingushetian leaderships referenced specific

events in the political lives of their republics less and less often. Gamson (1992:3) claims that all collective action frames contain an injustice component, and “injustice focuses on the righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul.” Even though North Caucasian rebel leaders made recourse to a grievance narrative, it is missing from a large number of statements, and the leadership offered significantly less fire and iron as time wore on.

Nor does there appear to have been significant contestation over diagnoses. Indeed, it is notable that there was no increase in diagnostic framing at times of internal dispute, namely the 2010/2011 leadership challenge to Umarov and the post-2014 emergence of IS. When compared to the contestation over the diagnosis that marked the birth of the IK and the final split with the nationalists, this suggests a high degree of consensus within the movement over the diagnosis. Yet it also points to the diagnosis being taken for granted: it was not that it was missing, so much as it was implicit, and leaders simply presumed that it was clear what they were fighting against. In addition to the progressive neglect of diagnostic framing, we can see evidence of this in the handling of social mores in Ingushetia and Dagestan. The greater focus on the subject in the statements of the general leadership in Ingushetia compared to that in Dagestan could lead one to conclude that the Ingushetian leadership was more puritanical than its Dagestani counterpart. Yet a detailed reading of the overall tone of statements suggests this would be an erroneous conclusion. Instead, Salafi communities are much more prevalent in Dagestan than in Ingushetia, and therefore it is possible insurgent leaders may have felt less need to explicitly highlight such issues. The debates about social mores were already taking place elsewhere, and thus did not require such detailed discussion.

The broad decline in the articulation of grievances and a degree of dependence on

external narratives poses something of a dilemma when viewed from the perspective of the social movement literature. Gamson's previously cited claim about injustice, while exaggerated, points to the theoretical importance of diagnostic framing. A core presumption of the literature is that specification of what is problematic is a prerequisite for mobilization. Snow and Byrd (2007:126), for example, argue that,

Ideological tensions and framing disputes notwithstanding, clarification of the character of some problem or issue and who or what is culpable is a necessary condition for targeted action.

The IK was not merely seeking to end particular practices, like the violation of human rights; instead, it was demanding the revolutionary replacement of the entire social and political system. Yet, for the most part, its leaders failed to undertake the clarificatory work that explained the fundamental problem and why merely addressing these practices would not have been sufficient. Yet this does not necessarily mean that the literature is wrong. The IK, after all, declined as a movement over time. Although we must be cautious about offering *post hoc ergo propter hoc* explanations, a failure to clarify the nature of the problem left the movement largely preaching to the converted. There may have been agreement within the movement over the nature of the problem, but the rebel leadership failed to build the necessary foundations for persuading those not already convinced to engage in targeted collective action.

Prognostic Framing: Distinct Differences in how To Reach an Uncertain Destination

Shari'ah as a Vague Goal

Throughout the existence of the IK, we find that insurgent leaders across the region repeatedly evoked a single goal: the implementation of Shari'ah law. This is a recurring

thread, running through the statements of Kabardino-Balkarian, Dagestani, and Ingushetian leaders, in those issued by specific leaders and those attributed to a depersonalized general leadership. At times, this trope was evoked as a destination, something that the insurgency was fighting to achieve; at others, it functioned as an existing reality that needed to be defended from the infidel. This ambiguity in many ways reflected the ambiguous nature of the IK itself: a 'state' that both existed and yet made no pretence of exercising any of the functions of a state. Yet, whatever the status of this Shari'ah-governed imaginary, only in Astemirov's statements do we find any explanation of what Shari'ah meant in practical terms. He was, admittedly, vague on the specifics, but no more than any opposition leader who rails against corruption and injustice without specifying precisely what they would do to eliminate them. For the remainder of the leadership, Shari'ah was a trope, a blank canvas onto which people could project their own imaginaries of justice.

The simultaneous vagueness of and insistence on Shari'ah points to a broader lacuna in IK leadership statements: The absence of any kind of programme for political change. If the insurgency was fighting to bring about a brave new world, its leaders offered few clues as to what that world would look like. Not only was the idea of a Shari'ah-governed polity devoid of details, but nor was there any articulation of short- or medium-term goals. Even during periods of internal division, when the existing framing literature would lead us to expect an increase in prognostic framing and contestation over goals, no such increase occurred. Kurbanov (2010:615) found a similar shallowness in argumentation in his analysis of the Jamaatshariat.com website, which was closely linked to the evolution of Jama'at Shari'at itself:

A reader in search of enlightened debates on the jama'at's political agenda of social, economic and cultural reforms for Dagestani society, or a critical assessment of the power of the authorities backed up by statistical analysis,

would be thoroughly disappointed.

Expecting insurgents to conduct statistical analysis may be over-optimistic, but even a descriptive analysis or plan is notably lacking. Instead, we find frequent recourse to a strategy of defining goals through opposition: a rejection of the status quo; a rejection of the infidel; a rejection of nationalism. In the early years in particular, both the Kabardino-Balkarian and the Ingushetian leadership intrinsically linked the legitimacy of the regionalization of the insurgency to the pursuit of religious goals. The implication was that any derogation from these goals would jeopardize support for a militant leadership based in Chechnya. Yet self-definition through opposition requires a clear alternative to contrast oneself against, and over time the salience of nationalism as an opposition ideology faded. Consequently, in Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia, this approach to directing the insurgency also began to disappear. Interestingly, this does not appear to have been a significant theme in the statements of Dagestani insurgent leaders. One possible explanation for this is that the nationalist movements in Dagestan were fundamentally different from those in the other republics. In Dagestan, nationalism acted to divide rather than unite groups, whereas Islam offered “a potentially supra-ethnic identification” that transcended ethnic divisions (Omel’chenko and Sabirova, 2003a). Thus, nationalism did not provide a viable alternative to Islamism for a republic-wide insurgency. Equally important, religious identity was more integrated into the conception of nationality, rendering contrast between the two meaningless. The ethnic composition of Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia was less complex, and in the former a nationalism distinct from Islamism could easily exist – and, indeed, was beneficial if appealing to a trans-Circassian identity that included the predominantly Christian Abkhaz.

Violence as Theory

One of the key differences between many of the progressive, left-wing movements that dominate much of the social movement literature and their insurgent equivalents is precisely their decision to engage in systemic violent opposition to the state. As such, consideration of insurgent social movements naturally gives rise to the question of how they justify this decision. If societies are conceived of as regulating relations between people, then surely one of the features of this relationship that they seek to regulate is the use of violence. In stepping outside existing social and political systems for channeling opposition, insurgencies are therefore challenging the very foundations of society. We might, therefore, reasonably expect movement leaders to afford considerable attention to justifying this decision if they expect to persuade others that their chosen path is the correct one. Furthermore, the framing of violence potentially sheds light on two important dimensions of the nature of movements. First, it may tell us something about the intractability of a conflict. Even in the eyes of the state, not all violations of social norms are equal, and the question of how far a movement has gone beyond accepted boundaries is intrinsically linked to the question of how far it has to come back (presuming, of course, an outcome other than victory for the challenger). Second, if violence requires the transgression of existing social norms, it is potentially a more contentious issue – and thus is more likely to give rise to intra-movement disputes.

How, then, did IK leaders address the question of violence? Here, we can draw a useful distinction between violence as theory and violence as practice. If we consider first violence as theory, there was considerable convergence in the position articulated by regional leaders. In justifying their involvement in armed conflict with the state, leaders made recourse to two interlinked strategies. The first was to portray violence as the only

option in the circumstance. The insurgency was not transgressing social norms because it wanted to, but because the state had itself already moved beyond the boundaries of acceptable behavior, leaving them with no choice but to respond in kind. The second strategy was so fundamental, so universal, that it is easy to take for granted. Indeed, the lack of time most leaders devoted to explicitly defending its applicability suggests that many of them did precisely that. That strategy was the decision to portray the conflict as a jihad. Within Islam, there is no contention over the legitimacy of jihad – and in particular defensive jihad – and the obligations a declaration of jihad imposes on Muslims (Cook, 2005), just as in Christianity there is minimal contention over the theory of just war. It is for precisely this reason that Osama bin Laden sought to portray his global jihad as a defensive one (Holbrook, 2014). Controversy arises only in determining whether particular circumstances meet the requirements for its application.

However, only two IK leaders, Astemirov and Tikhomirov, addressed in any detail the question of whether the concept of defensive jihad was applicable to the North Caucasus. Astemirov published a lengthy response to a compatriot who had called this applicability into question, outlining his theological justification of why the insurgency was engaged in a legitimate jihad (Astemirov, 2008b). Tikhomirov, too, portrayed arguments that what was occurring in the Caucasus did not qualify as jihad as a deliberate misinterpretation of facts (Tikhomirov, 2009a). Both leaders rejected the idea that the strength of the insurgency bore any relation to the question of whether the conflict qualified as jihad. The remainder of the leadership – most of whom were not theologically trained or well-versed in these debates – simply took the applicability for granted. This allowed them to argue that involvement in violence was an obligation incumbent on all Muslims – something that was central to their motivational framing.

Violence as Practice

Where the consensus over the legitimacy of violence started to dissolve and distinct differences emerged between the regional branches of the IK, particularly in its early years, was in the treatment of the concrete, specific application of that principle. In Kabardino-Balkaria, Astemirov and Dzhappuyev both dedicated considerable effort to explaining individual attacks and demonstrating concern for civilian casualties. There was in their statements a clear constituency that insurgent leaders appeared reluctant to alienate. Equally important, there was a differentiation between the local and the federal enemy and a desire to avoid escalating tensions. In Dagestan, Jama'at Shari'at represented the polar opposite. Descriptions of violence were gratuitous, concern for civilians was mostly lacking, and there was no dividing line between the local and the federal. Jama'at Shari'at's attitude to those caught in the middle was less of a party to a potential electorate than of a tornado to garden furniture: If you're in its way, don't blame the tornado. The Ingushetian leadership occupied something of a middle ground, with concern for civilian casualties coupled with diminishing boundaries between local and federal enemies. Over time, however, the differences between the republics became much less distinct. After the demise of Jama'at Shari'at, Dagestani leadership statements became less bloodthirsty. After the deaths of Astemirov and Dzhappuyev, the Kabardino-Balkarian leadership referred less frequently to specific events, and therefore devoted less time to justifying violence. Across the insurgency, violence became more and more abstract.

Another noteworthy feature of the practical application of violence was the limited consideration given to alternatives. Asal et al. (2013:314) argue that movements choose from a menu featuring both different forms of contention (protest, violence, or a combination of the two) and forms of non-contention. The menu on offer in IK leadership

statements, however, invariably consisted of just one item – violence – and such variation as was to be found was simply in how strong it should be. The greatest variation was to be found in Kabardino-Balkaria, where Astemirov spoke of a preference for persuasion over violence, and Shebzukhov advanced his own interpretation of spiritual jihad. Similarly, if less extensively, we can see it in the Ingushetian leadership's denial of responsibility for threats directed at cafés, hairdressers, and shops, on the grounds that it was necessary to conduct *da'wa* first. In Dagestan, alternatives to violence were largely referenced in the context of supporting violence – through financial donations or material support. The three cases operate on a spectrum with regards to their attitudes to violence. Yet, in all three, there was little consideration of other forms of contention, to non-violent forms of challenging the authorities – not necessarily as an alternative, but even as a complementary strategy. Indeed, when the issue arose, these were explicitly ruled out: When protests erupted in Ingushetia, for example, or when Jama'at Shari'at's representatives were asked in an interview about political versus armed struggle. A potential avenue for future enquiry is whether such a non-diversified menu of options is attributable to the nature of groups or their political environment, or a combination of the two.

A Very Near Enemy

An important question arising from the promotion of violence is who that violence is directed against. Indeed, it is often considered pivotal to considerations of the ideology of 'terrorist' groups. For a group like AQ, it is regarded as one of the fundamental characteristics distinguishing it from earlier jihadist groups – although the distinction is more ambiguous than commonly recognized (Hegghammer, 2009a; Holbrook, 2014) – and there is extensive scholarly debate over the switch from the supposed "near" enemy, the

local Muslim rulers, to the “far” one, the United States and its allies (Gerges, 2009; Holbrook, 2014; Hegghammer, 2015). As Chapter Three argued, these concepts are a poor fit for the North Caucasus. Research into the position adopted by the central leadership (Youngman, 2019), however, shows the discussion to be largely irrelevant. Umarov initially employed his own clear hierarchy, with Russia the main enemy, the local authorities a secondary concern, and the outside world distinctly tertiary. Over time, the hierarchy became less distinct, but was never overturned. Under Kebekov and Suleymanov, the IK central leadership, as well as the defecting IS leadership, became much more closely aligned with global actors, but this did not result in the West being identified as a primary enemy or concern (Youngman, 2016).

There are reasons to expect this hierarchy of enemies to be strongly represented, indeed more so, at the regional leadership level. After all, regional actors played a critical role in establishing the IK, and therefore shaping its broader ideological orientation. If ideological influence travelled in the opposite direction to violence as the conflict regionalized (Campana and Ratelle, 2014), then it is logical that the post-proclamation priorities articulated by the central leadership be already strongly represented in regional leadership framing. Moreover, the IK conducted or attempted multiple attacks outside the region. These often did not merely trace back to actors in Dagestan and Ingushetia; in some cases, the perpetrators were directly linked to, even the spouses of, local leaders. There was a clear operational focus that extended beyond the local enemy.

It is therefore surprising that Umarov’s hierarchy was only weakly replicated among IK regional leaders. It existed in the statements of Astemirov, one of the driving forces behind the proclamation: He portrayed Russia as the main threat, and the local authorities as mere stooges whose replacement would not fundamentally change the situation. Indeed,

Astemirov was explicit that the West was not the insurgency's concern – as with Umarov, there was clearly no love lost, but nor was there directed hostility. Dagestani and Ingushetian leaders, however, were more, not less locally oriented. In both republics, the focus was on anyone associated with the existing systems of governance, those accused of slandering or informing on the insurgency, and those responsible for supposedly forbidden or undesirable social practices. As the insurgency itself moved closer to global actors in the third phase, this was not reflected in the identification of new enemies or priorities. Indeed, a notable feature of the defecting leadership's communicative output was the lack of an explanation for the decision (Youngman, 2016). Even more curiously, there was hardly any discussion of the suicide attacks which the Dagestani leadership were directly linked to. Events that would appear to be highly significant therefore went unexplained in regional leadership communiqués. A complete explanation for this communicative gap, however, would require consideration of a broader selection of IK material and thus cannot be offered here.

Motivational Framing: A Reliance on Islamic Identity

Islam as the Foundation of Identity

Motivational framing represented the most developed component of IK regional leadership statements. At the heart of efforts to inspire involvement lay identity. At the most basic level, IK leaders left little room for doubt that they conceived of this identity as Islamic first and foremost – an obvious point, but one that nevertheless warrants recognition. The ubiquity of Islamic reference points can easily render us numb to their significance. Yet they represented what was, without question, the single most consistent feature of statements across space and time, regardless of the style or education of the

speaker or the specific messaging or purpose of the communiqué. The overwhelming majority of statements started and finished by offering praise to Allah; they were replete with quotes from the Qur'an and hadith; greetings on Islamic holidays were commonplace. Speakers often used Arabic for Qur'anic quotations, even when they were not Arabic speakers, as a means of reinforcing their own credentials as Islamic leaders (Moore, Copeland and Youngman, forthcoming). Where these features were absent or less prominent, it was typically a consequence of restrictions imposed by the format, such as structured interviews. By themselves, they were so recurrent as to acquire the status of the mundane, and as such appear to offer little by way of insight into specific mobilization strategies. After all, Gammer's assertion (2006:213-214) that "even the most secularised and Westernised nationalists have always regarded Islam as one of the principle components of Chechen identity, tradition and culture" holds true for much of the rest of the region. Even the statements of leaders like Maskhadov were replete with Islamic references, even though the orientation and flags were very different.

There is, however, nothing inevitable about such references, and their universality and centrality serve the same purpose as the use of Arabic: to establish the actors as Islamic ones. In other words, since religion itself can be regarded as an ideology, they cue the audience in to the movement's broad ideological orientation. They set the scene for the articulation of a specific movement identity, which in turn provides the foundation for efforts to mobilize. These Islamic references should not be mistaken for "master frames," a kind of "master algorithm that colors and constrains the orientations and activities of other movements" (Benford and Snow, 2000:618). If religion is an ideology, then demonstrations of religious adherence cannot be a master frame, since the latter lacks "the elaborate social theory and normative and value systems that characterize a full-blown ideology" (Oliver

and Johnston, 2000:50). They do, however, facilitate the use of visual and lexical pointers that establish links to jihadist master frames. Many of the video statements featured, in the background, black flags emblazoned with the *shahada*. Variants of this symbology have, since the 9/11 attacks brought jihadism to the global public consciousness, become synonymous with the jihadist movement, highlighting its ability to co-opt standard Islamic concepts and symbols. Although the exploration of visual symbology is beyond the scope of this study, the ideological transformation and growing Islamization of the North Caucasus insurgency throughout the 1990s was most visible in the transition from the green, wolf-bearing Ichkerian flag to the black banner of jihad (Moore, 2010:33). This was matched by a lexical shift and the transformation of Umarov's framing that accompanied the proclamation of the IK (Youngman, 2019). Throughout the existence of the IK, across both space and time, insurgent leaders employed a consistent vocabulary that drew on these jihadist master frames and deliberately positioned the movement as a jihadist actor. Thus, the insurgents themselves were "mujahideen" and their leaders "emirs," while their opponents were a collection of "infidels" (*kaffir/giaor*), "hypocrites" (*munafiq*), and "apostates" (*verootstupnik/murtad*). The cumulative effect of these references was to cue the audience to the movement's broad ideological orientation, even before leaders engaged in more direct processes of negotiating meaning.

Negotiating Ethnic Identities

The jihadist lexicon is inherently Manichean, and insurgent leaders fully embraced this dualism in their communiqués. Leaders consistently portrayed the boundary between Muslims and non-Muslims as absolute and non-negotiable and the differences between "us" and "them" as completely irreconcilable. As such, the relationship between the two

groups was invariably antagonistic, with no recognition of the possibility of peaceful co-existence. Notably absent from leadership identity framing were any stories of relationships or positive interactions transcending this divide. Leaders across the insurgency reinforced this basic dualism by developing the themes of virtue and vice, often at the level of the individual. In doing so, building on the foundational Islamic identity, they sought to encourage people to distance themselves from the “other” and instead live up to the standards of true believers – embodied, of course, in the mujahideen. The insurgency’s opponents were routinely portrayed as malevolent, dishonourable, and devoid of redeeming characteristics – all the more so the higher one went up the chain of command. On the other side of this divide, leaders emphasized the valour, selflessness, and, of course, religiosity of the insurgents. The contrast between those who are “the most zealous on Allah’s path” and the “drunken occupiers and their *murtad* concubines” (Kavkazcenter, 2007d) could not have been starker. The evocation of Islamic identity sought to force the audience to make a choice, portraying this identity as incompatible with inaction, while these differing portrayals aimed to leave the audience in no doubt as to which side to choose.

This Manichean divide holds across the geography and lifespan of the IK. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify distinct differences in the construction of “us” with regards to the treatment of ethnicity. In referencing ethnic identity, insurgent leaders had to perform a difficult balancing act. Success in motivating audiences is heavily influenced by the ability of speakers to make their appeals relevant to their target, and for this reason discursive strategies typically “strongly depend on the audience targeted” (Campana, 2013:465). High levels of self-identification along ethnic lines in the North Caucasus make ethnicity potentially important to audience identification with a message. Neglecting ethnicity, by contrast, can fail to neuter possible alternative channels for mobilization, such

as explicitly nationalist movements. Placing excessive emphasis on ethnicity, however, makes it harder for speakers to appeal beyond their own ethnic group, and thus undermines both efforts to build a regional identity and the cross-border applicability of messaging.

Insurgent leaders in the three republics differed in how they managed these challenges and attempted to subordinate ethnic identities to a religious one. Kabardino-Balkarian leaders were arguably most successful, arguing for the primacy of a common religious identity over Kabardin/Circassian versus Balkar differences. Ingushetian leaders focused on ethnicity to a greater degree, but, since the main dispute was with the “infidel” Ossetians, this could nevertheless be accommodated within a religious framing of the conflict. In both cases, identity was essentially framed as Muslim first, ethnic affiliation second. Dagestani leaders, by contrast, sought to overcome ethnic divisions by emphasizing a Dagestani identity that was inherently Muslim. This aimed at the same goal: prioritizing religious over ethnic identity, by arguing that people were Dagestanis first and Avar, Lezgin and so forth second. The consequence, however, of emphasizing Dagestani identity as inherently Islamic was that it limited the salience of Dagestani leadership statements to non-Dagestani audiences, thereby running counter to efforts to establish a region-wide movement identity.

This is significant when placed in a broader movement context. In the early years, when each branch of the insurgency was active in both operational and media terms – with each setting up its own “official” media outlet – the salience of framing in one republic to audiences in another may not have been particularly significant. Over time, however, the overall communicative output by Kabardino-Balkarian and Ingushetian leaders declined, and the IK as a whole was much more dependent on its Dagestani branch. Suleymanov was one of the few remaining actors in the later years who continued to offer a diagnostic and prognostic vision. However, he was also the leader who was most exclusionary in his

motivational framing. Already lacking the charisma of Astemirov and Tikhomirov, he evoked a specifically Dagestani identity more than any other leader, further limiting his appeal. An ideological vision for the movement may have persisted, albeit in diminished form, in Suleymanov's statements, but they did not have the same reach.

Offering Rewards and Evoking Obligation

Many of the arguments for mobilization were implicit. If Muslims are under attack and at war and you are a Muslim, for example, then the solution and the onus on you to implement it to a degree becomes self-evident. However, leaders also pursued a more explicit strategy, one that also relied on prior acceptance of identity framing: obligation. Time and again, IK leaders argued that Muslims are obliged to join the cause and wage jihad. As the conflict was, in their eyes, a defensive jihad, this obligation was *fard al-ayn*, incumbent upon every Muslim, rather than *fard al-kifaya*, falling to only part of the community. Astemirov, for example, described "self-defence" as "the holy duty of Muslims" (Astemirov, 2007). Qadi Saadullayev, Tikhomirov, and Gasan Abdullayev extended this obligation beyond the Caucasus to all Muslim territories (Saadullayev, 2008; Tikhomirov, 2008a; Abdullayev, 2012). Jama'at Shar'iat claimed that a failure to fight the infidel constituted a denial of religion (Kavkazcenter, 2007c), while Suleymanov equated jihad to fasting and castigated those who failed to fulfill their duties as sinners (Suleymanov, 2011, 2012). The concept was sufficiently well understood and convenient that it was not confined to the statements of those with theological training; indeed, Umarov also relied heavily on it (Youngman, 2019). Moreover, if the notion of obligation relied on acceptance of identity framing, it also worked to reinforce it. There were recurrent calls for people to offer material support or to pray for its members – even absent calls for

people to come and join the insurgency. These calls served as a way of encouraging ongoing engagement with a broader movement culture.

These dimensions of motivational framing were further reinforced by the routine eulogization of “martyrs,” which presented behaviours to emulate and promised rewards for those who did. Leadership statements regularly praised those killed, including the leaders themselves. They placed particular emphasis on how insurgents had taken on a numerically superior enemy, or bravely sacrificed themselves for their comrades. This enabled leaders to spin negatives into positives: death was virtuous, rather than regrettable, and the numerical superiority of the enemy was an opportunity, rather than a reason to give up the fight. Indeed, eulogization offered a mechanism for addressing practical concerns: Leaders did not seek to deny the difficulty of the struggle in which they were engaged so much as downgrade the importance of those difficulties. Both Astemirov and Tikhomirov used the concepts of defensive jihad and sacrifice to argue that concerns about the strength of the insurgency were irrelevant. Tikhomirov, meanwhile, devoted considerable effort to addressing the practical objections and arguments for not mobilizing that potential recruits might have, drawing on his own experience and supposed doubts in doing so. Martyrdom was also offered as a goal in and of itself – and compared to that of establishing a Shari’ah-governed polity, it was one that the insurgency found much easier to deliver.

The practice of eulogizing martyrs was not unique to the leadership: Campana and Ducol (2015:693-694) identify it as a key theme of IK websites. It drew on the Islamic notion of martyrdom as something more active than its Judaic or Christian equivalent, as something to be sought rather than passively attained (Cook, 2005:26). Celebration of martyrs encouraged sacrifice on behalf of the cause. At the same time, there was a notable contrast between the martyrdom narratives present in IK leadership communiqués when

compared to those in, for example, Palestine and Afghanistan. In these other cases, there are broader social processes at play, where the public celebration of martyrs draws on and feeds into existing cultural practices (Hafez, 2006; Edwards, 2017). In the North Caucasus, there is no such practice of celebrating martyrdom in and of itself, nor did the IK control territory so that it could encourage its emergence. The notion of the rewards awaiting the martyr was also fundamentally underdeveloped. Leaders claimed that Allah would offer the ultimate rewards for sacrifices, which would make up for losses in this world (Kavkazcenter, 2008h, 2009m; Tikhomirov, 2009a). What these rewards were, however, were left to the imagination of the believer. The complaints of Islam Din over the failure to observe basic security practices, meanwhile, suggest leaders might have been happier with somewhat less martyrdom.

Preaching to the Choir

In considering motivational framing, we also need to consider the intended audience for communiqués. In many cases, this was not explicitly stated, and had to be inferred from the general message. Yet, as the discussion of both diagnostic and prognostic framing has shown, leaders often neglected to undertake the persuasive work that would be necessary to convince those who were undecided, much less opposed, to the notion of jihad in the Caucasus. Instead, they frequently appeared to be talking to itself. On occasions, this was explicit, such as during the periods of leadership division where messages were directed towards fellow insurgents. Indeed, it is noticeable that, during such periods, the message to external audiences was often to keep their nose out and mind their own business. At other times, it was implicit in the failure to address the concerns of people or talk about the situation as it affected them. As time progressed, this inward focus appeared to increase.

In considering leadership communiqués, we clearly need to consider them as performing an internal movement function as much as seeking to mobilize potential supporters or communicate to external audiences. Two such functions in particular are evident. First, it is clear that the movement at times experienced communication difficulties and had to resort to publishing messages in order to reach those within the movement. This can be seen in, for example, Astemirov's message to an Abu Usama al-Ingushi, because the private correspondence had not reached its destination. It can be seen in the six months it took for insurgent leaders to negotiate Umarov's appointment, during which time the Chechen authorities intercepted and publicized messages. It was particularly apparent in the split over whether to pledge allegiance to IS, where leaders claimed their efforts to resolve differences behind closed doors had been undermined by the impossibility of communicating (Youngman, 2016). It is no coincidence that the internal focus of communiqués increased as the insurgency found itself facing ever-increasing operational difficulties. Second, Cordes (2001:151) highlights the importance of "auto-propaganda," whereby communiqués aim "not only to explain their actions to others but to persuade the terrorists themselves that what they have done was justified." The lack of concern shown at times towards potential audiences – manifested not only in content, but also in such basic issues as ensuring that the audio quality was sufficient to allow messages to be heard – suggests this was an important dimension. Moreover, if ideology performs an important socialization function within movements – an assertion that isn't contradicted by anything found in this study – then communiqués offer a mechanism for achieving it.

Mobilizing Structures: Shrinking Capabilities and Intellectual Worlds

The Degradation of the IK's Leadership Cadres

The first and second chapters illustrated how leadership can usefully be conceived as the performance of certain tasks and functions. These include representing the interests of the group in interactions with outsiders; articulating the beliefs of the group; establishing goals and guiding the movement towards them; inspiring participation; and responding to shocks (Melucci, 1996; Weinstein, 2007; Morris and Staggenborg, 2007; Crenshaw, 2011; Gurr, 2011). They perform this role within a negotiated relationship with movement members (Melucci, 1996). They do, however, enjoy distinct advantages in the relationship, particularly in terms of access to a microphone and the ability to set the agenda. They do not necessarily perform these tasks alone: Individual leaders may perform only some tasks, and they may delegate authority to perform them to other people. Nevertheless, the leadership cadre as a whole assumes responsibility for their performance.

If leadership is conceived in these terms, then it becomes possible to talk of a gradual decline in the quality of IK leadership cadres. In the first phase, in Kabardino-Balkaria, Astemirov provided a detailed systemic critique and articulated clear goals for the movement. In Ingushetia, Taziyev did little in terms of public leadership, but delegated authority to Tikhomirov, who clearly articulated a set of beliefs and sought to shape the identity of the movement. Astemirov, Taziyev, and Tikhomirov represented very different types of leaders, but they all acted as clear representatives of their groups. In Dagestan, the situation was somewhat more complicated, given the high turnover of leaders, but the general leadership of Jama'at Shari'at was nevertheless highly active in communicating the group's beliefs, and the absence of identifiable leaders was to a degree offset by the

strength of the IK leadership in the other vilayyats.

By the third phase, the IK boasted very few skillful communicators capable of representing their groups' interests or articulating its goals. In Kabardino-Balkaria, Shebukhov's short statements failed to explain what the insurgency was fighting against or what it hoped to achieve, and he articulated a form of spiritual jihad that appeared largely divorced from either a clear group or constituency. In Ingushetia, Makhauri barely represented his group in the public domain at all, and offered no coherent explanation of the decision to realign the group with a global actor, IS. In Dagestan, Asilderov may have articulated the beliefs of the groups, but he did so by facing inwards: He not only failed to represent the group in its engagement with the outside world, but also mostly displayed little awareness of that world. Suleymanov arguably performed some of these tasks, explaining what the insurgency was fighting against and for in more detail, but his style and identity framing undermined his appeal. Suleymanov's apparent flaws would arguably not have been critical in other contexts: A dry, scholarly approach is, for example, hardly unique among jihadist scholars, a good many of which are verbose in the extreme and whose appeal is limited to fellow jihadist intellectuals. However, Suleymanov was operating in a movement in decline and, by the end, was one of the few voices still representing the IK. He therefore had a greater load to carry. This decline in framing should not be viewed in isolation and posited as the sole cause of decreased mobilization. Regardless of how it framed its struggle, the insurgency was under intense pressure, and the need for new recruits and new leadership cadres was so strong precisely because of the high levels of attrition among existing members. Davenport (2014) notes that existing social movement literature is contradictory on whether repression of movements leads to their decline, and that this represents the most neglected area of existing research. Yet, if one of

the tasks of leaders is to respond to shocks, then this is a task at which the IK's leaders palpably failed.

Contracting Intellectual Worlds

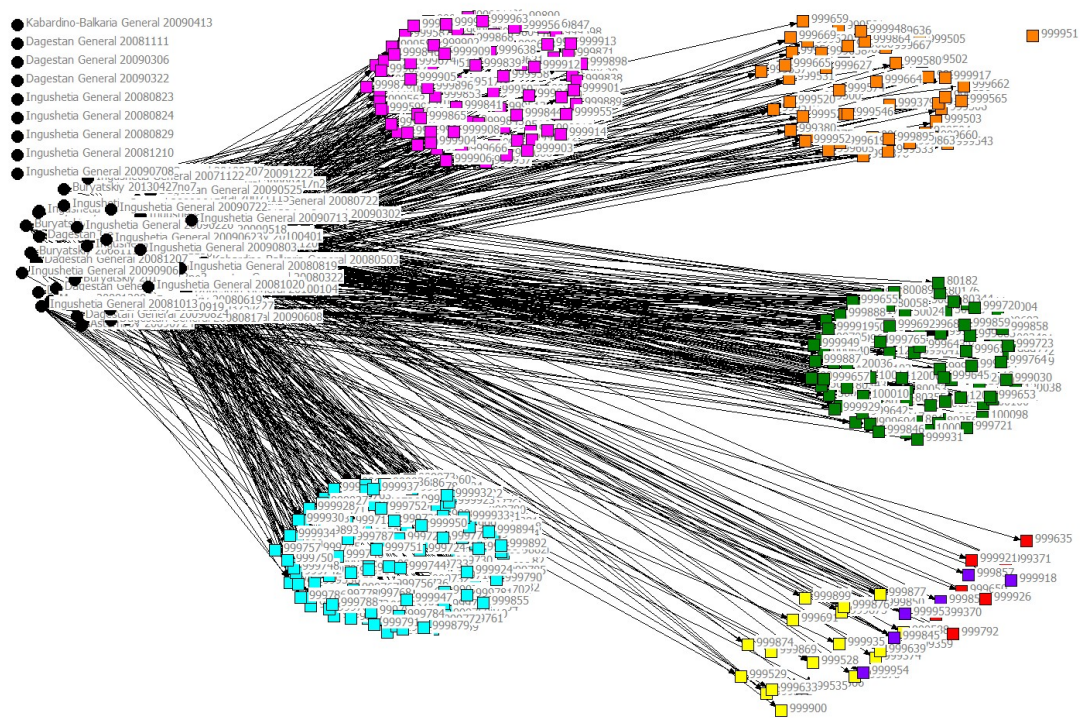


Figure 30. The intellectual world of North Caucasus insurgent leaders – Phase one. Green = insurgent actors, red = Russian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly, yellow = historical, turquoise = regional, purple = global. Black nodes are the communiqués.

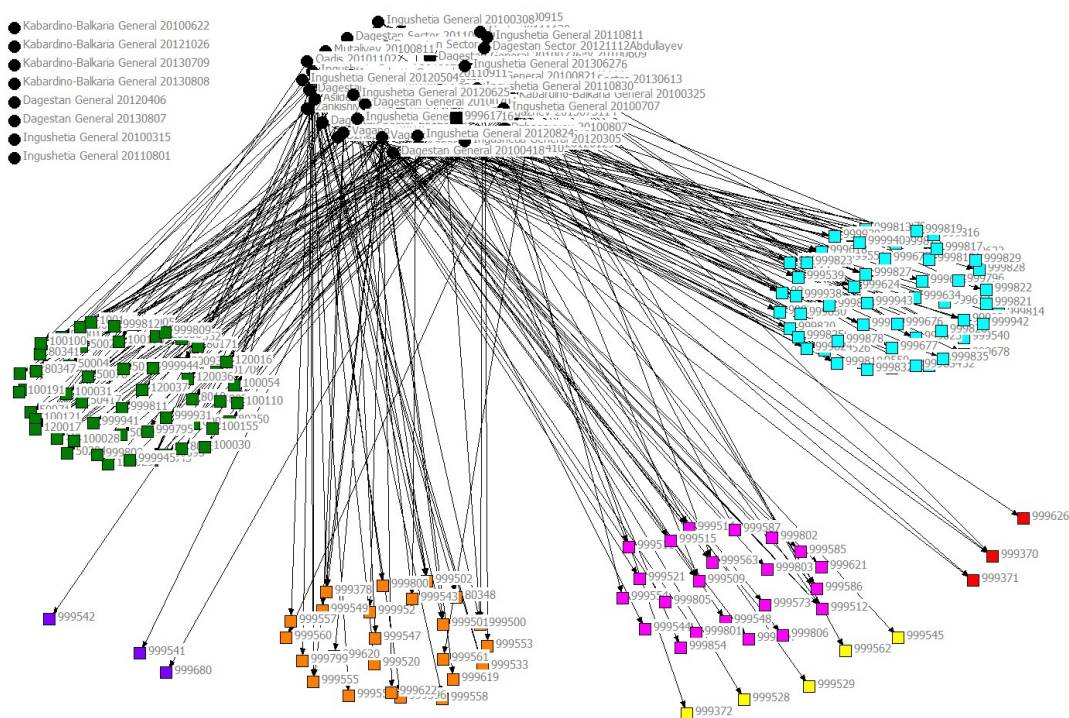


Figure 31. The intellectual world of North Caucasus insurgent leaders – Phase two. Green = insurgent actors, red = Russian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly, yellow = historical, turquoise = regional, purple = global. Black nodes are the communiqués.

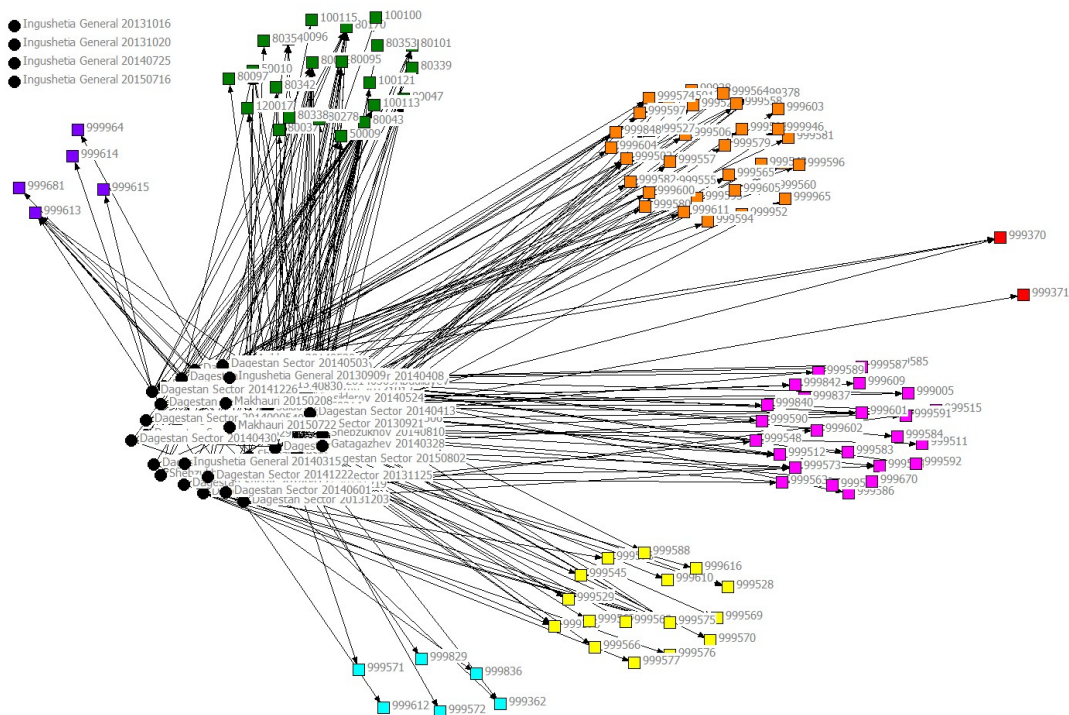


Figure 32. The intellectual world of North Caucasus insurgent leaders – Phase three. Green = insurgent actors, red = Russian, orange = Qur'anic, pink = scholarly, yellow = historical, turquoise = regional, purple = global. Black nodes are the communiqués.

The broad decline in the quality of the IK's leadership cadres is visible in the shrinking of their intellectual horizons. In the first phase, 422 people were present in this intellectual world, an average of 5.57 per communiqué. The spread of actors featured was relatively broad: Approximately a third of references were to Qur'anic and scholarly figures, a third to individuals in the North Caucasus, and a fifth to individuals within the insurgency. It is, however, local actors – both inside and outside the insurgency – who dominate the picture. In the second phase, the most significant change is the depth of the network: Only 163 individuals, or an average of 2.95 per communiqué, feature. There is a slight decrease in the relative weight given to Qur'anic and scholarly figures and an increasing focus on fellow insurgents, but the overall spread of the network does not significantly change. In the third phase, however, we see a further decline in the depth and scope of the network. The overall number of references falls to 110, or 2.29 per communiqué, and there is a marked increase in references to Qur'anic and scholarly figures, who account for almost half the total. At the same time, there is a sharp decrease in references to non-insurgent actors, both in the region and more broadly: In the first and second phases, these accounted for a stable two-fifths of the network, but in the third, only slightly over 15%. This encapsulates the insurgency's problem in a nutshell: It still possessed people who could articulate a scholarly justification for their actions, particularly in Suleymanov, but it did not possess people who could translate that into the real world concerns of their target audience. The final generation of IK leaders articulated an ideology that paid little heed to the real people and the real problems those outside the insurgency interacted with.

Finally, the intellectual world of the insurgency sheds light on the engagement with jihadist scholarship – something that is seen as particularly important to considerations of ideology. Campana and Ducol (2015:692) note that IK websites act as resource banks for

global jihadist material, including the statements of people like Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada. And, indeed, we find such individuals featured within the intellectual worlds of IK leaders. The most obvious illustration of this was in Astemirov's communication with Al-Maqdisi, asking him to rule on a particular dimension of movement activity (Astemirov 2010b). Astemirov referenced Maqdisi twice more in the context of translating his book, *Millat Ibrahim*, which he claimed explained the "reforms" undertaken under the banner of the IK (Astemirov, 2009e, Astemirov, 2012). Thus, we can see that Maqdisi had a significant influence on Astemirov's personal interpretation of the movement's ideology. Suleymanov, too, drew on the ideas of Muhammad Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab, devoting a lecture series to his work. Again, therefore, we can speak of a strong influence on an individual. But beyond these two cases, jihadist scholars were not prominent figures in leaders' intellectual worlds. Indeed, what stands out is the superficiality of the engagement with their work: Those others individuals who feature do so in passing, as one-time mentions in support of individual points. The IK was fully immersed in a jihadist culture and portrayed its struggle exclusively in those terms, but it was – for the most part, and particularly post-Astemirov and Tikhomirov – not an intellectual movement substantively engaging with jihadist scholarship as an intellectual project.

Political Opportunities: Limited Engagement and Mirror Images

Human Rights Actors: Unstructured Opportunities for Influence

In considering political opportunities in the North Caucasus throughout the period of study, two factors stand out as being particularly important. First, such limited opportunities as existed were closely linked to the political priorities emanating from the federal centre. Second, they were highly dependent on the personal preferences of

individual actors and lacked formal mechanisms or institutionalization. These two factors were closely linked. Indeed, the choice of who occupied the republican leadership often reflected the preferences of the federal leadership. Thus, Yevkurov's appointment to the Ingushetian president was an early signal of President Medvedev's increased emphasis on "soft" policies in the region, and these gathered momentum with Magomedov's appointment in Dagestan. Similarly, Putin's return to the presidency and the triumph of "hard" policies was reflected in personnel changes: Abdulatipov's ascension to the Dagestani presidency and the appointment of two men with security service backgrounds, Yuriy Kokov and Sergey Melikov, to replace economic managers, Arsen Kanokov and Aleksandr Khloponin, as Kabardino-Balkarian head and North Caucasus presidential envoy respectively. Changes were not always immediate or dramatic, but they were perceptible in analysis of the opportunities for engagement available to human rights actors.

The rehabilitation commissions – only briefly considered here because of their limited engagement with human rights actors – provide a good illustration of these two factors. In the case of both the Dagestani and the Ingushetian commissions, officials retained their position despite changes to their formal roles. In the former, Abdulatipov de facto abandoned the commission as soon as he came to power. In the latter, one human rights activist opined that it survived solely thanks to the political will of Yevkurov (Interview HR201603001). The persistence of some "soft" initiatives under Yevkurov illustrates that republican leaders were not mere conduits for the will of the federal centre, but instead were able to exercise agency in either facilitating or obstructing initiatives. Further evidence of this comes from Kabardino-Balkaria, where it is evident that the commission was created solely because of signals coming from the federal centre. Yet this agency had clear limits. The commissions were also almost exclusively dependent on such political

will. As one interviewee noted, they had no basis in the Russian Criminal Code or legislative acts (Interview HR201603001).²⁵

The absence of human rights activists from the formal work of the commissions illustrated a broader problem that they faced in influencing political decision-making: a lack of formal mechanisms for managing demands. Even in periods of apparent liberalization, engagement was mostly in the form of ad hoc measures and individual meetings, rather than institutional processes. Across the region, even apparent liberalizing actors appeared to have a narrow conception and deep suspicion of civil society. They sought to instruct human rights actors much as they would other officials or coopt them into official structures, rather than tolerating and encouraging the emergence of independent actors with whom they could partner. The rehabilitation commissions were populated almost exclusively by state employees, particularly representatives of the security services. Human rights actors, however, were crucial to the commission's stated purpose of encouraging disengagement from the insurgency – not least because people looking to disengage are more likely to trust them than the security services. The authorities, however, preferred to engage those who shared their worldview, even at the cost of undermining the effectiveness of their own initiatives. Liberalization, therefore, manifested itself as much in access to the public space as anything else. Public engagement with officials signalled the acceptability of discussing certain issues, and the importance of this should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, the absence of formal processes signifies the limits of human rights actors' ability to affect change. As one interviewee put it, "without the will of those

²⁵ If a court followed the recommendations of the commission, then it was the court's decision that had legal power, not the commission's. A court, however, was under no obligation to abide by a recommendation, and if the commission recommended not prosecuting and the case never reached court, that decision did not have any legal foundation whatsoever. In other words, in the absence of a court decision, there was no guarantee that a case wouldn't be reopened at a later date

who possess power and authority, nothing changes. We don't have a mechanism of compulsion" (Interview LW201702001). The North Caucasus, in this regard, is not a departure from the Russian norm. Taylor (2011:26), for example, identifies "the continued dominance of patrimonial and informal bureaucratic practices" as one of the key failings of Russian state-building. Rather, the North Caucasus – as in many other spheres – is where pan-Russian problems are magnified and reproduced in circumstances of intensified social conflict.

The Insurgency: Ignoring and Imitating one's Opponent

What is the relevance of these conclusions for the insurgency? On the one hand, it is remarkable how little impact changes in political opportunities had on insurgent framing. With the exception of rejecting the public protests that marked the end of Zyazikov's tenure as Ingushetian president, there was little consideration of alternative forms of resistance. Insurgent leaders did not give serious consideration to the idea of engaging in political struggle – and, indeed, in Jama'at Shari'at's case, explicitly rejected it – and consequently did not directly consider questions of access to political processes. Nor did they devote significant space to challenging the "soft" policies and the rehabilitation commissions whose express purpose was to undermine their support base. Even the return of "hard" policies did not find its reflection in the communiqués of leaders who, by this point, were mostly turning inwards.

On the other hand, consideration of political opportunities does help us better understand insurgent framing and movement activity. If the most significant manifestation of relative liberalization is not formal measures or processes but access to the public space, then this affects how we interpret changes to the insurgency's own access to that space.

Following the January 2011 bombing of Moscow's Domodedovo airport, the media curtailed its coverage of the insurgency. Statements by senior IK militants and the internal politics of the insurgency received considerably less attention after that point. During the Sochi Olympics, there was a de facto moratorium on violent incidents in the North Caucasus. In other words, over time the insurgency was progressively denied access to the most significant of the limited political opportunities that were available.

To a degree, we can also see the political environment and the nature of the state reflected in statements. In Dagestan, local security services played a much more prominent role than they did in Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, where the lead in counterterrorism activity is arguably taken more by the federal security services. Thus, the greater focus on local rather than federal security services in Dagestani leadership statements is less a reflection of a particular ideological position – all actors portrayed Russia as the source of the problem and the local actors as no more than their tools of oppression – than of the political realities of the republics. Furthermore, the insurgents' apparent disregard for persuasion and tendency to dictate to the population rather than convince a constituency is a reflection of the authorities' own attitude to the territories they governed. The insurgency mirrored the state in more ways than it would have cared to admit – a subject to which we will return in the next chapter.

An Ideologically Limited and Weakly Integrated Movement

Ideological Shallowness and a Dependence on External Narratives

Throughout the preceding discussion, we see time and time again that the IK leadership was largely preaching to the converted. Few leaders painted a detailed picture of what the insurgency was fighting against or offered a clear vision of what it was fighting

for. Transcribed, over 850 pages of statements reveal remarkably little about how IK leaders imagined a world in which they were victorious, and later leaders failed to build on the arguments offered by their predecessors. Instead, the pages yellowed, the corners curled, the colours faded. There was a heavy dependency on external jihadist narratives, and on audiences already understanding the purpose of the IK's armed struggle. There is a presumption in social movement studies that groups will "offer an alternative view of society, economy and polity that is grounded in protagonists' experience and struggle" (Gillan, 2008:247). Yet what stands out from the IK is the extent to which it failed to engage in these processes of constructing meaning on a consistent basis. If ideology offers a vision of how the world is, how it should be, and how one should bridge the divide between the two, then the IK was what may be characterized as ideologically shallow. These ideas existed, but as a comprehensive vision they were the property of isolated individuals and often underdeveloped. The IK was not an intellectual movement, and over time this ideological shallowness increased as the IK lost many of the leaders capable of articulating that vision. In later years, if you didn't already know what the insurgency was fighting for and against, leadership statements were not the place to find the answer.

The question is: Does this matter? After all, it is hardly unprecedented for violent political actors to pursue multiple, vague, or contradictory goals, or indeed no goals at all (Kalyvas, 2006:23). The PIRA, for example, survived longer than most groups, but it hardly presented a complex and sophisticated political vision for the future. Indeed, as one former participant noted, it was "not a very analytical movement for a long time. [...] Once you have an armed struggle, there's people dying, it takes on a certain momentum of its own" (Alonso, 2007:85). Many a mainstream political actor in opposition, too, has managed to challenge for power without fleshing out what it will do when it achieves it –

and we should not hold insurgent leaders to a higher standard than others. There is, indeed, a case to be made that a certain vagueness is beneficial in maintaining unity. Moreover, the North Caucasus itself furnishes us with examples of how the absence of a positive vision is not necessarily an impediment to attracting support. The Salafi critique is, in many regards, a fundamentally negative and reactionary one, a backward-looking rejection of certain practices. The life work of Bagauddin Kebedov, one of the leading figures of Dagestani Salafism, is, for example, an 800-page point-by-point refutation of Sufi practices, not a political programme of action or a positive vision (Kebedov, 2006). A lack of prognostic framing does not appear to have significantly damaged his popularity. The statements of Tikhomirov similarly offer little by way of goals or a plan of action, and yet he is widely regarded as one of the IK's most inspirational leaders.

Nevertheless, several IK leaders themselves claimed it was important for insurgents to know what they were fighting for. Even by their own standards, therefore, they failed to perform the necessary explanatory work. They never addressed the question of whether their imagined future state was even viable. As one interviewee noted, the region is heavily reliant on federal subsidies, and it is arguably not economically sustainable without them (Interview AC201603001). If economic factors and the lack of opportunities for self-realization create fertile ground for alternative ideologies such as Salafism (Akaev, 2010:65), then a failure to address this surely represented a missed opportunity. The social movement literature, moreover, argues that such explanatory work is necessary for sustained collective action, and this literature is heavily biased towards stories of successful mobilization. The IK leadership neglected to conduct this work and ultimately failed to mobilize on the scale necessary to sustain itself – including those potential supporters who did respond to the Syrian conflict. Although we must be careful not to posit a simple causal

relationship, these two facts are surely not coincidental.

Weakness along one dimension also needs to be viewed in the context of weakness along others. The aforementioned Salafi critique, for example, may be limited in explicit prognostic framing, but an 800-page refutation of undesirable behaviours shapes action through a process of negation: If A, B, and C are forbidden, I can actively refrain from doing A, B, and C. Absent such a discussion, however, I have neither a positive nor a negative plan of action. The weakness of prognostic framing therefore needs to be placed alongside the weakness of diagnostic framing. A strategy of definition through opposition similarly only works so long as there is something to define oneself in opposition to. The passage of time, however, continued to undermine the salience of once-vibrant nationalist ideas, rendering, for example, the alternative vision offered by the ChRI leadership-in-exile largely irrelevant. For those who accepted the jihadist paradigm, there apparently wasn't much to argue about with regards to either diagnosis or prognosis. This, however, resulted in a movement poorly equipped to persuade anyone on the margins.

Exclusive Identities and Practical Concerns

The one area where IK leaders were relatively consistent was in their articulation of identity framing, pointing to its importance to considerations of the movement's ideology. If leaders were often vague about their starting point and destination, they were much clearer on how one should behave and definitive on who one should be along the way. Identity served as the foundation for the IK's more explicit mobilizing strategies. If reshaping identities is "often a primary movement goal" (Polletta and Jasper, 2001:296), then this is the one area where leaders performed strongest in task fulfillment.

The problem of this existing in isolation, absent diagnostic and prognostic framing,

was that it became highly generic. IK leaders articulated an identity that was common to the jihadist movement as a whole, rather than specific to the IK. Leaders in the three republics accommodated existing identities, particularly ethnicity, in different ways, and therefore crafted appeals to those identities in a manner that was often republic-specific. However, they did so in service of a common goal: mobilizing for the jihad. The starting point may have been different, but the destination was the same. This meant that they weren't attempting to mobilize support behind a particular political programme that the IK could demand loyalty to. This may not have been consequential in the absence of a rival operating in the same space, but it became so as soon as one emerged. There was nothing in the IK's identity-based mobilization appeals that didn't apply equally to its new, IS-aligned rival post-2014.

A further problem for the IK came from its progressive failure to answer practical concerns. In its early years, leaders such as Astemirov and Tikhomirov directly addressed these concerns and the counterarguments to mobilization. Indeed, this was central to Tikhomirov's messaging, in which he offered a personalized narrative that drew on his own supposed doubts prior to mobilizing to combat those of his intended audience. In later years, however, most leaders displayed little interest in any possible arguments against mobilization. Asilderov, in particular, focused on practical issues only in so far as they directly affected those who had already joined the insurgency. This failure occurred when the IK was under immense pressure and there were good reasons to be concerned about whether resistance was pragmatic. By the end, even its own leaders admitted it had reached something of a dead end. In the last statement issued by the last known IK leader, Shebzukhov – issued outside of the period of study – he asserted: “that it has long been time for the mujahideen of the Caucasus to change their tactics is an indisputable fact”

(Shebzukhov, 2015c). Shebzukhov recognized longstanding and widespread perceptions that armed struggle as not viable, yet the North Caucasus insurgent leadership did little to address them.

The Syrian conflict provides ample illustration of the importance of such concerns to ideological appeal. Numerous militants fighting in Syria explained their decision to travel there, rather than remain in or return to the Caucasus, in terms of the difficulty of the situation in the region and the impossibility of achieving anything in the current circumstances. Russia was one of the biggest contributors of ‘foreign fighters’ to Syria and Iraq, and the majority of those people came from the North Caucasus (Youngman and Moore, 2017). Although these were numerically small in relation to the broader population, they would have been sufficient to sustain the domestic insurgency. They included, moreover, people who had not previously mobilized in the region, despite the efforts of the insurgency to get them to do so.

Three Linked Insurgencies

One of the questions that this study has sought to address is whether the North Caucasus insurgency is a unified movement, as it is usually treated in academic literature, or actually a collection of interlinked insurgencies. Detailed consideration of the statements of insurgent leaders suggests that adopting the latter perspective is more accurate. Insurgent leaders displayed little interest in events beyond their own republics’ boundaries, as illustrated by both their diagnostic framing and the scope of their intellectual worlds. We see distinct differences in the early years when it comes to moderation and concern for the social impact of violence, and in the dates leaders offered for the start of their own conflict narrative. Overall, other North Caucasian republics do not assume a significantly greater

importance in local leadership statements than do events elsewhere in the jihadist world. We also see distinct differences in how leaders incorporated ethnic identities into their conceptualizations of jihadist ones. Together, these findings suggest that we should be cautious of methodological approaches that are based predominantly on research in one republic, but seek to draw generalized conclusions about the North Caucasus as a whole. As two interviewees noted, treating the region as a unified whole creates vague generalizations that ultimately tell us little about the specific dynamics at play in each republic and how they differ from processes elsewhere in Russia (Interview JO201603001; HR201603001).

There are at least three arguments against treating the IK as a collection of distinct insurgencies. First, it could be argued that the ideology of each branch was not sufficiently developed for these insurgencies to be regarded as distinct entities. In other words, if we break the movement into smaller and smaller parts, it becomes increasingly unclear what defines those parts. There is merit to this argument, but it is counteracted by the ideological shallowness of the movement as a whole. The ideology was always parasitical on a broader jihadist one, and over time it became increasingly reliant on it. Thus, if ideological complexity is a criterion for definition, then eventually we lose the ability to consider even the IK as a distinct proposition – something that is evidently absurd. Second, there was both a regional and a Russian context to movement activity. Regional leaders accepted the authority of a central leadership, the statements and actions of that leadership shaped the movement, and the environment in which the movement operated was influenced by federal and regional political dynamics. All of this is true, but consideration of specific local dynamics does not preclude accounting for broader contextual factors, it compels it. Insurgent groups around the world are influenced by US policy, but this does not justify treating them as if they are one amorphous insurgency. As Al-Rasheed (2009:302-303)

notes, we need to look at the specific contexts in which groups “operate, react or against which they rebel.” Third, this study has considered only one dimension of movement activity, and incorporating others may significantly change the picture. This is also true, and further study is certainly needed. Yet, in the IK era, it was relatively rare for insurgents in one republic to appear in another – much rarer than would be the case for a truly integrated movement. The personal networks of leaders, too, do not reveal extensive cross-border ties, particularly after the deaths of those leaders who formed part of Basayev’s networks. Finally, frames themselves do not exist as an abstraction from movement realities, but are instead the result of negotiation between groups and a reflection of mobilizing structures (Melucci, 1996:355). This being the case, mobilizing structures communiqués are reflecting are far from integrated, and we see little cross-republic negotiation occurring. The exception, in all regards, was the relationship between insurgents in Chechnya and Ingushetia. As such, approaching the conflict in the North Caucasus as three linked insurgencies – Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, and Chechnya-Ingushetia – opens up the potential for a more sophisticated understanding of the region as a whole.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to consolidate the insights gained from the rich empirical discussion of the three cases and, in doing so, address some of the movement-specific questions guiding this study. It highlighted the importance of viewing these findings in context, and the insights that a focus on leadership communiqués can offer to our understanding of the IK as a whole. It demonstrated how, with certain notable exceptions, leaders in the three republics did not offer a sophisticated ideological vision that identified

clear problems and a plan of action for redressing them and bringing about the Shari'ah-governed polity they claimed to be seeking. Instead, these leaders were largely – and increasingly over time – reliant on external jihadist narratives and prior agreement with the jihadist worldview. The one area that leaders did concentrate particular efforts on in terms of meaning construction was in promoting a distinct jihadist identity, and relying on this as the basis for more explicit mobilization strategies.

The discussion then turned to contextualizing these changes in framing and considering their significance for how we understand the IK and its regional branches. It demonstrated that the IK suffered from the progressive degradation of its leadership cadres over time, with a reduction in intellectual capabilities and individuals capable of articulating a longer-term vision matched by a shrinking of intellectual horizons. It also showed the superficial engagement with jihadist scholarship, demonstrating the importance of a contextualized reading of references to it. Examination of political opportunities shed light on the constrained environment in which the insurgency was operating, where such opportunities were highly limited, dependent on the political will of the authorities, and largely denied to the insurgency. Nevertheless, it demonstrated that insurgent leaders' own position was shaped by and, to a degree, mirrored that of their opponents. Finally, the discussion turned to the nature of the IK's ideology as a whole, highlighting the implications of a reliance on identity framing and neglect of practical concerns, and arguing for treating the IK as three distinct, but interlinked insurgencies. In the next chapter, we will turn to the insights these findings offer us into how we understand the role of ideology in political violence more generally.

Conclusion

Reflecting on Ideology and Political Violence

Introduction

This study has demonstrated the importance of accounting for the role of ideology in political violence and contributed to a more nuanced understanding of that role through a rich descriptive analysis of three cases. The first part of the study looked at existing approaches to the study of ideology, political violence, and the North Caucasus and established the context and parameters of the study. The first chapter examined different conceptions of what ideology is and how this shapes expectations as to the role it plays. It then explored the various ways in which existing scholarship tends to reject or marginalize ideology, highlighting the problems with this neglect. The second chapter argued that social movement theory provides us with a theoretical framework and set of analytic tools capable of addressing these shortcomings. It demonstrated that framing theory can be used to capture the articulation of ideology and the processes through which movements actors seek to negotiate meaning, while the concepts of mobilizing structures and political opportunities can help us understand the actors themselves and the context in which these ideas are circulating. It then explored how these concepts relate to one another, and to questions of ideology. The third chapter introduced the case studies to be used, detailing the evolution of the conflict in the North Caucasus and the neglect of ideology in studies of the contemporary insurgency. It then developed a methodology for applying SMT to the chosen cases, and the methodological and ethical challenges arising from such an

application.

The second part of the study, in chapters four to six, undertook a rich descriptive analysis of the cases of Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia. These chapters examined how insurgent leaders in each of the republics framed the conflicts they were engaged in and how internal and external factors interacted with this process of negotiating meaning. Within each case, not only were framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities considered in detail, but the analysis was divided into temporal phases that tracked the internal evolution of the movement as a whole and helped us understand how these processes changed over time.

Finally, the first chapter of this third part of the study identified broader conclusions about ideological variance and change across the North Caucasus insurgency. In doing so, it answered some of the case-specific questions that have guided this study. The chapter demonstrated the weakness of diagnostic and prognostic framing and leaders' heavy reliance on identity framing, and it considered the degradation of the IK's leadership cadres over time and the impact of limited political opportunities on framing. It then argued that the IK could be conceived of as ideologically shallow and weakly integrated movement. In this chapter, the discussion identifies broader lessons for our understanding of the role of ideology in political violence. It considers the merits of studying a corpus of communiqués and reflects on the roles of both identity and pragmatism in assessing ideology and its appeal. It then argues that ideology tracks the contours of power in significant ways. The chapter concludes by discussing the contribution of the study and outlining several avenues for deepening our understanding of ideology.

What we can Learn From Communiqués

The study of the ideological position adopted by leaders tells us a great deal about movements and the leaders themselves, even absent information on audience reception. At the most basic level, they tell us about the priorities that movement leaders set: the actors or problems they identify as important, or the methods they advocate and whom they direct them against. This, in turn, provides us with insights into the degree to which they perform the movement tasks incumbent upon them by virtue of their role. These furnish some of the information necessary to considering the nature of their leadership, allowing us to compare differences between their articulated preferences and the realities of the violence with which they are engaged. Unless one adheres to the dehumanizing position whereby jihadists are treated as if they are all the same and the only approach considered is to kill them, then understanding these priorities and movement dynamics is essential to formulating policy responses to them. By examining preferences and attitudes, we gain a clearer appreciation of their responsiveness to particular measures or policies, or indeed the very likelihood of achieving any form of reconciliation. Although it was never considered, based on the attitudes revealed in this study it would have been, for example, considerably easier to imagine dialogue with the OVKBK leadership in the first or even second phase than it was with Jama'at Shari'at.

Communiqués can also provide us with insights on who has authority within movements – something that an actor like Tikhomirov clearly shows does not always correspond to formal roles. If individuals are appearing in the public space and claiming their voice represents the movement, then they are important to shaping the meaning of those movements. Indeed, statements form an important part of the process by which leaders stake their claim to authority. How others in notional positions of authority then

interact with those claimants can tell us something about their legitimacy and the degree of consensus that exists within the movements. Contrast, for example, the frequently non-conflictual nature of succession with the Kabardino-Balkarian and Dagestani leaderships' rejection of Chechen rebel leadership claims in the 2010-2011 challenge to Umarov. The network of such interactions can in turn shed light on the broader structure of authority within the movement. If multiple actors reference the ideas or defer to the same individuals, then those individuals can reasonably be considered to have a more significant impact on meaning construction than those who are ignored. IK leaders who were not overly interested in events outside their republics frequently referenced Umarov as enjoying overall authority, in doing so endowing his voice with special weight and helping construct a region-wide movement identity. This may not have resulted in an integrated movement, but it arguably helped sustain the idea of armed struggle in Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia for longer than would have been the case had insurgent narratives depended exclusively on the activities of movement members within those republics.

This is not to say that all such authority is present in communiqués and that they provide us with a complete picture of the movements. Important facets of movement activity, such as suicide attacks linked to the Dagestani leadership, are only negligibly reflected in leadership communiqués. Key actors such as Astemirov, Vagapov, and Malachiyev clearly enjoyed regional links, but these are only partially revealed through their framing and intellectual worlds. Astemirov and Tikhomirov both played a key role in shaping the meaning of their movements and featured prominently in IK online propaganda for years after their deaths, but they were not prominent figures in the intellectual worlds of other insurgent leaders. For leaders such as Taziyeu and several early Dagestani leaders, we cannot adequately consider their leadership through their communiqués at all. We

consequently need to be wary of simplistic and monocausal explanations, where individual factors are offered as explaining either everything or nothing – a problem that has plagued terrorism studies in particular (Youngman, 2018). The study of ideology and leadership can only contribute to our understanding of political violence; it can never explain it fully.

Nevertheless, insurgent leadership communiqués often reveal more information than their authors intend. Even though the IK claimed to be a regional movement affiliated with a global jihadist ideology, we can see that in reality its leaders were overwhelmingly concerned with events and actors in their own republics and only superficially integrated into a single movement. Engagement with jihadist scholarship and interest in events outside even the region, much less Russia, was minimal. This remained true even with the notional globalization of the movement and the decision of a number of actors to align with IS. The irony of this globalization was that it was led by a man whose intellectual horizons barely extended beyond his line of sight. The predominance of the local, coupled with efforts to redirect the appeal of the Syrian conflict back into the North Caucasus (Youngman, 2016), suggests that allegiance with IS was as much driven by the outside world forcing the insurgent leadership to take into account global changes as it was by any genuine interest in what was happening in the “caliphate.” Communiqués provide us with information that helps us challenge the narrative that insurgent leaders sought to present.

This, in turn, demonstrates the value of adopting a corpus approach and considering a broader communicative context. A superficial reading of statements conceals many of the nuances revealed in this study and creates a misleading impression of the overall ideology of the movement. It is easy to cherry-pick material and construct a narrative of an insurgency moving towards and ultimately fully integrating into some kind of “global jihad” (see, for example, Cohen, 2012; Hahn, 2014). This, in turn, frees authors from the

need to consider the individual actors and contexts, because jihad in one area can be subsumed into a broader discussion of a global jihadist phenomenon and one jihadist can be treated as very much like another. Even a more considered reading of selected statements potentially produces a distorted picture if only evidence of particular themes is sought. Isolated instances of each of the issues highlighted as assuming prominence at particular times or in particular locations can be found outside these times or locations. It is the relative weight afforded to them and how they fit in the broader communicative landscape that changes.

The Importance of Identity to Ideology

Identity has largely supplanted ideology in analysis and the two concepts are poorly integrated. Yet this is clearly a mistake. Ideology without identity seldom makes sense. If ideology relates to “interconnected beliefs and attitudes, shared and used by members of a group or population” (Fine and Sandstrom, 1993:23-24), then identity establishes the boundaries of the group and governs its internal and external relations (Tilly, 2003:32). In other words, identity is central to establishing the framework in which those beliefs and attitudes can be shared. There has been a tendency to oversimplify belief structures into a focus on instrumental goals or particular types of activity (Gillan, 2008), yet the predominance of identity in the IK’s ideology challenges this. Identity is not a concrete object, but a process that allows meaning construction to take place (della Porta and Diani, 2006:92), and meaning construction is central to ideology. Polletta (1998:143) explains the formation of collective identities through narrative, and this offers a powerful mechanism for contextualizing framing in successful movements. However, it presumes a degree of sophistication, the ability to construct a story to “make sense of unfamiliar events, to

engage as they explain.” The IK’s leadership neglected much of this explanatory work. In these circumstances, I would contend that ideology offers a clearer path to understanding identity construction. Ideology is less rooted in the immediate situation in which actors find themselves, and its evocation at any given moment can be far less sophisticated than required for the construction of a narrative – particularly with a movement, like the IK, that is parasitical off a broader ideological system. Moreover, if ideologies articulate a vision of how the world should be and have a behavioural component that is, at a minimum, implicit (Fine and Sandstrom, 1993:23-24), then it is difficult to see how they can function without a conceptualization of identity. Try imagining any desired future world, other than perhaps an apocalyptic one, and it will require people. In order to fit within that desired world, to represent the ideal, those people will have to adhere to the normative behaviours of that world, and conceive of themselves as belonging to it. Anything else is not an ideological vision, it is a dystopian one. Collective identity is not reality, but an analytical tool and lens for interpreting reality (Melucci, 1996:51). As such, the future occupants of this future world will require a collective identity in order to interpret their “reality” correctly.

This research suggests that the identity component of ideology is not merely crucial, but is for some movements its main feature. The IK was ideologically shallow, in that it was not an intellectual movement, did not offer a sophisticated political vision or an arena where this vision could be debated, and was largely parasitic of a broader collection of ideas. Yet it had a clear conception of how people should behave and who people should be in order to bring its desired world into being. Although this study has considered only three cases within a single movement and examination across a range of cases is required, I would suggest this holds true for a number of movements. The IK, the PIRA and the far right are all examples of movements that are highly ideological but not intellectually

sophisticated. In conceiving of ideology in doctrinal and intellectual terms, many scholars neglect the importance of the identity component of ideology and, in neglecting ideology, miss an important dimension of movement activity.

The Pragmatic Dimensions of Ideological Appeal

The existing literature on social movements argues that it is not sufficient to persuade people that your diagnosis and plan of action are the right ones; something more is needed to convince people to mobilize (Wiktorowicz, 2004a; Snow and Byrd, 2007). This study offers ample evidence to support this conclusion and suggest that persuading people of the practicability of action is as important as specific plans or goals, if not more so, in translating ideological appeal into mobilization. The IK's early leaders demonstrated an awareness of this issue in a way that later leaders arguably did not. The mobilization achieved as a result of the Syrian conflict, and in particular the emergence of IS, shows that there existed in the North Caucasus a community of people who were sympathetic to jihadist ideas but not prepared to mobilize to fight in the North Caucasus. One of the key dimensions of IS' appeal in its early years was the perception – promoted not only by jihadists, but by sensationalist mainstream media coverage – that IS was successful, that it was winning. Yet, when IS tried to translate its mobilizing potential back into the North Caucasus in order to sustain its new affiliate, it too failed (Youngman, 2016).

Pragmatic concerns may, therefore, trump ideological ones. This was illustrated by one interviewee, a supporter of Chechen nationalism rather than jihadism. He absolutely rejected Russia's sovereignty over Chechnya, but admitted that an independent Chechen state was not viable without external support, and thus in the present circumstances. As such, he insisted that, if a new war of independence were to break out, he would not side

with those demanding independence (Interview CH20161017). In other words, he accepted the ideological premise of independence for Chechnya, but not its feasibility, and as such was not prepared to mobilize behind it. Detailed examination of what jihadists say and how they explain their own decisions shows that, on the whole, they are no less affected by practical concerns than other actors. As Al-Rasheed (2009:302-303) argues, some academics are “blinded by the global media messages of Jihadi ideologues.” This applies not only to ignoring the local dimensions of conflict, but also to uncritically accepting narratives of martyrdom and death being as appealing as life. As Islam Din’s criticism of Kabardino-Balkarian militants’ security failings illustrated, martyrdom may have been conceived as virtuous but a little less of it would be highly preferable.

The progressive weakening of diagnostic and prognostic framing, the failure to communicate a coherent political message, and the lack of later persuasive work to explain the practicability of action all give rise to the question of how the IK managed to sustain itself for as long as it did? Here, I would note a couple of important factors. First, and arguably most importantly, violence tends to acquire its own logic and momentum, sometimes independent of the intentions of those who initiate it. Just because a movement encounters a mobilization problem does not mean it magically disappears. It can take many years for the impact of these problems to become apparent. Indeed, it is notable that, even with high attrition rates and relatively rapid ascension through the ranks, the majority of the IK’s last generation of senior leaders joined the insurgency before 2010, when the necessary explanatory work was still to some degree being carried out. Second, there are likely to be distinct ideological processes at work for existing versus new members. Nothing revealed here contradicts assertions about the socialization role of ideology; indeed, the internal focus of many communiqués supports Cordes (2001) claim that they

can perform an important auto-propaganda function. Yet insurgent movements, arguably more than others, must maintain a certain level of recruitment if they are to survive, and so it is insufficient to appeal only to existing members. This analysis does not attribute a mono-causal mobilizing role to ideology. Rather, it sees meaning construction as an important factor alongside others, and leaders as engaged in trying to shape that construction through their communiqués.

Ideology Along the Contours of Power

The IK's failure to explain its actions and persuade potential supporters to mobilize using rational argumentation also needs to be placed in the political context of the North Caucasus. When we do this, we see that the IK is not the only political actor guilty of this behaviour. In this non-democratic setting, the republican authorities frequently introduce policies without explanation, and there is often little vibrant public debate over problems and their potential solutions. The IK leadership's shortcomings become less stark in this regard: It was not competing in a market place of ideas so much as aspiring to replace one monopoly of political thought with another. Tripp (2013:3) contends that resistance often follows "the contours of power itself," and there is strong support for this idea in the ideology of resistance articulated by North Caucasian rebel leaders. All too often, they did not seek to persuade so much as order, instruct or admonish – much like the North Caucasian authorities. The opposing parties to the conflict had more in common with each other than either would care to admit. The difference, of course, is that those authorities possessed the mechanisms to enforce their dictates.

It will not surprise those who argue for a more contextualized reading of ideology that ideological preferences and the manner in which they are expressed are heavily shaped by

the political dynamics of the areas in which insurgencies operate. Yet it contradicts the image that revolutionary insurgents try to present of themselves as representing a complete break with the status quo, and runs counter to the dominant focus within terrorism studies on a supposedly “global” jihadist ideology. The IK tried to portray itself as part of a global movement that rejected Russian statehood, and in doing so it drew on both ethnic identities that crossed state boundaries and a supposedly transnational Muslim identity. In this regard, it supports Cronin’s (2009:142) assertion that groups that employ terrorism are both transnational and sub-national and “transcend the Westphalian state system.” At the same time, the IK patently failed to break free of the political system that produced it. It would perhaps be unfair – given the degree to which the imagined unity of this community is taken for granted in both scholarly and public debate – to point out that the very idea of the “Muslim world” is a colonial construct having little in common with the Qur’anic notion of the *umma* (Aydin, 2017). Even putting this aside, however, the communiqués show IK leaders to be fully embedded within the Russian political realities they so fervently rejected. The problems they identified, the actors they engaged with, and key components of the layered identities they evoked were invariably rooted in the political entities in which they operated. These leaders failed to construct an ideology that truly transcended intra-state, much less international, political boundaries.

Contributions of the Study and Further Directions

This study has sought, first and foremost, to produce a ‘thick’ description of the ideology of the North Caucasus insurgency and how different insurgent actors and operating environments shaped the articulation of that ideology. It has sought to develop a rich understanding of the meanings that insurgent leaders have sought to craft around the

conflicts they are involved in as a prerequisite for mobilising people behind their cause. Consequently, the study has significantly advanced our understanding of the ideology of the insurgency in the IK era, a hitherto largely neglected area of study. It has drawn in to the academic conversation a unique and extensive dataset of primary and secondary source material, most of which has not been previously examined. The result is a complex, multidimensional, and highly contextualized analysis of ideological variance and change.

In line with the discussion of case studies offered in Chapter Three, this study rejects the positivist perspective on ‘generalization,’ and therefore does not propose a general theory on the nature and role of ideology. This does not mean, however, that the study does not carry important lessons for the study of ideology and political violence in other contexts. On a practical level, this study shows the value of taking ideology seriously. Often, ideology has been studied either as an abstraction or in a superficial manner that does not give due consideration to primary source material and the circumstances of its production. This is particularly true of studies of jihadist groups, where jihadism has frequently been treated as some kind of universal phenomenon that is already well understood, and therefore does not require further examination. This study, however, clearly shows that, if we move beyond the most superficial level of analysis, ideological material strongly reflects the circumstances of its production. The first strand of a working hypothesis – one that must remain incomplete without knowing the context to which it will be applied – is therefore that any study of ideology must be designed to take adequate consideration of the actors, environments, and existing power dynamics in which it is deployed. While this may seem an obvious point, it is not always in accordance with how ideology in general, and jihadism in particular, have been studied to date. Any study of jihadism in the abstract is unlikely to tell us a great deal about the role it performs in any

given context. A second strand of a working hypothesis is that identity is critical to any considerations of ideology, and that this is particularly true for non-ideological movements. Thus, any study seeking to understand ideology in other contexts cannot focus exclusively on diagnoses of the status quo or on stated goals – on the supposedly doctrinal aspects of ideology. If we accept one of the foundational principles of interpretivism, that people act on their beliefs and preferences (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002), then identities clearly play a key role in shaping those beliefs and preferences – and thus are central to people’s willingness to mobilise for a cause. A final strand of our preliminary hypothesis is that ideology has a clear pragmatic dimension, meaning that it must not only appeal to prospective supporters on an ideational level, but also address their practical concerns. This being the case, in studying ideology in other contexts, we need to pay attention to the degree to which articulated ideologies address those practical concerns. Where they fail to do so, either through neglect, inadequacy, or impossibility, we may expect to see a decline in mobilisation. This does not attribute a causal power to ideology – that a failure to address practical concerns leads directly to movement decline – but instead recognizes that ideology is one of the factors that shape the meanings and interpretations that provide the basis for mobilization.

This study has also made a valuable contribution to Social Movement Theory. Framing theory has previously been criticized for its ignorance of culture (Gillan, 2008), and this typically manifests itself in a focus on particular types of framing processes at the expense of the circumstances that produce them. This study has sought to rectify this problem. At the same time, I have advanced SMT by bringing several aspects of the theory into closer dialogue with one another. Although the interactive relationship of the various aspects of political process theory has been acknowledged, it has not usually been treated to granular

empirical analysis – instead, they are typically treated in isolation from one another. Moreover, most existing literature focuses on how mobilizing structures, political opportunities, and framing impact mobilization, not on how the first two shape the latter and on how framing relates to ideology. In bridging these divides, I have developed several innovative methodological approaches, especially in the assessment of political opportunities and mobilizing structures, that account for the challenges of working on data-barren cases.

Avenues for future study

This research suggests several avenues for further study. With regard to the ideology of the North Caucasus insurgency, it is important to note that I have not approached an area that has been mapped in detail. If the ideal is a rich topography revealing detailed contours, the reality to date has frequently been akin to maiden maps bearing the markings ‘X – jihadists here.’ Leadership communiqués are only one part of a broad ideological universe, but the only studies to date to systematically examine primary source material beyond this one are Campana and Ducol (2015) and Youngman (2016, 2019). No single study can hope to compensate for this neglect, and the value of a vibrant scholarly community offering multiple perspectives on the same issues cannot be underestimated. An obvious avenue for further study is to explore ideology in other areas and, in particular, to integrate top-down and bottom-up perspectives to understand how the ideology is engaged with by the audience. McAdam (1986) proposes that ideological identification is of particular importance to high-risk mobilization, and this study shows that insurgent leaders, consciously or not, agreed and placed considerable emphasis on trying to shape identity. A future avenue of enquiry is to assess the degree to which these presumptions are born out at

the individual level — in other words, to assess the importance of identity and ideological identification to responsiveness to movement leaders' calls for action. Given problems of access and the decimated state of the insurgency, however, this gap is not likely to be addressed in the immediate future. More feasible is integrating considerations of the rhetorical dimensions of ideology with its behavioural ones. The distinction between local and federal enemies found in statements naturally gives rise to the question of whether this is mirrored in attack patterns, something that would generate insights into the relationship between ideology and action. Comparing events and rhetoric would also enable us to understand the types of behaviour that are ignored in communiqués – and the relative neglect of suicide attacks is an obvious candidate in this regard. Finally, formal social network methods have – much as in the work of Edwards (2014) that has inspired the approach – only been applied here in a minimal way, and there is considerable potential for developing the concept of “intellectual worlds.” In particular, it would appear to offer a mechanism for comparing movements and their ideological relationships with one another in a rigorous manner, including through the integration of geospatial analysis. This study represents only a first step in what could be a potentially fruitful avenue for interpretative social network analysis.

Appendices and Bibliographies

Appendix One

Coding Schema

Holbrook's (2012:68) original coding schema, applied to AQ leadership communiqués:

Details of communiqué
Diagnostic elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Socio-cultural and normative issues<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Undesirability of existing societies• The grievance narrative<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Past events○ On-going events
Prognostic elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tactics and violence<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Importance of violence/claims of attack○ Political tools outside violence○ Constraints on use of violence○ Legitimacy of targeting non-combatants• Direction/scope of prognostic solutions<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Declared enemies○ Declared friends/allies○ Regions for support activity○ Regions for hostile activity• Strategic/political vision<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Lauded past/existing societies○ Desired way forward and end result
Motivational elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Message direction/audiences<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Declared audiences○ Appeals to Muslim audiences○ Criticism of Muslim audiences○ Condemnation of Muslim audiences○ Threats/warnings to non-Muslims○ Conciliatory approaches towards non-Muslims

Full coding schema employed in this thesis:

Diagnostic elements

- Socio-cultural and normative issues
 - The undesirability of existing societies
- Grievance narratives
 - Past events
 - On-going events

Prognostic elements

- Strategic/political vision
 - Lauded past/existing societies
 - Desired way forward and end result
 - References to ideological systems
 - Debates over the proclamation of the IK
- Tactics and violence
 - Importance of violence
 - Political tools outside violence
 - Constraints on the use of violence
 - Legitimacy of targeting non-combatants
- Direction/scope of solutions
 - Declared enemies
 - Declared friends/allies

Motivational elements

- Message direction/audiences
 - Declared audiences
- Identity
 - Who are 'we'
 - Who are 'they'
 - Who is in the middle
 - Stories of boundaries between groups
- Obligations and incentives
 - Obligations
 - Rewards
- Efficacy of action
 - Support and strength
 - Trust

Appendix Two

Constrained Fieldwork Opportunities in the North Caucasus

Introduction

In seeking to understand the role of ideology in political violence, we need to be clear about the limitations of what we know, and of what we can know. Top-down perspectives that focus on movement leaders and elites, such as that employed in this dissertation, invariably leave themselves open to the criticism that they offer a distorted perspective on the life of movements as a whole. The priorities of, and influences of and on, movement elites may differ significantly from those of its rank-and-file members. In considering ideology and communication, an obvious question — one repeatedly raised by reviewers and others — is how such communications are received by audiences, and how reception may differ from intent. These are reasonable questions, but we can only answer them if we are able to access audiences. In this appendix, I will outline the obstacles facing efforts to gain such access, the implications of failure, and the benefits that nevertheless accrue from largely unsuccessful attempts. The impact of these issues on what we can know is sufficiently great that they warrant detailed consideration. However, since the fruits of fieldwork contributed only minimally to the final dissertation, I can only justify offering the necessary detail away from —but nevertheless alongside — the main body of the text. What follows is invariably highly personalised and self-reflective, since opportunities are — as will be explored below — highly individualised and context-specific. Nevertheless, it will hopefully offer a clear picture of the challenges facing fieldwork in the North

Caucasus,²⁶ and of why admittedly important questions about audience receipt remain unanswered here.

Recognising the Theoretical Benefits of Fieldwork

The case for attempting fieldwork is a compelling one. On-the-ground research can help generate new primary data and break out of closed information loops, whereby researchers cite other researchers rather than original data. This problem has been clearly recognised in the study of terrorism and political violence (Dolnik, 2013a; Ranstorp, 2013), but, as chapter three demonstrates, it applies equally to scholarship on the North Caucasus. This dissertation draws predominantly on primary source data produced by the insurgency, thereby largely avoiding these issues. Nevertheless, the discussion of political opportunities illustrates that open-source information on the region is often incomplete or unreliable, making additional data highly desirable. Moreover, one of the strengths of the social movement perspective is that it breaks open movements, rather than treating them as unitary objects. Field research can help give voice to populations and actors within movements who may otherwise be neglected or marginalized in other sources. Blee and Taylor (2002:93), for example, argue that semi-structured interviews in the field can help “gain access to the motivations and perspectives of a broader and more diverse group of social movement participants than would be represented in most documentary sources.” Field research, then, can overcome something of an elite bias in the study of social

²⁶ In discussing both the challenges facing and the state of existing fieldwork in the North Caucasus, I focus predominantly on the perspective of researchers operating in an Anglo-American institutional context. Russian scholars carry out outstanding fieldwork into the region and boast a depth of insight and access that most Western researchers can only dream of. However, the opportunities available to, and constraints facing, Russian citizens and those operating within a Russian academic context are so fundamentally different from those facing Western researchers as to be incomparable.

movements by gaining access to rank-and-file members.

In certain domains, field research is arguably the only way in which we can bridge gaps in our knowledge. This is starkest when we consider the role of women in the insurgency. These have been virtually ignored in the existing literature, save for that focusing on a very narrow facet of activity, name suicide attacks. Highly gendered practices operate at multiple levels: within the insurgency; in security service practices; in media coverage of both; and in academic discussions of all three (see, for example, Gentry and Sjoberg, 2015; Nacos, 2008). Women were clearly involved in the life of the movement, yet we only have limited and highly flawed information with which to consider that involvement. Without access to these participants, we cannot begin to address these shortcomings. Thus, women involved in the North Caucasus insurgency serve as an illustration of how constrained our understanding of these movements actually is.

Field research can also play a key role in educating the researcher themselves about their subject and the environment in which events occur, and providing exposure to tacit knowledge the researcher would otherwise remain unaware of (Dolnik, 2013a:5). As Macleod (1995:138) observed in conducting his own research,

Once we descend into the world of actual human lives, we must take our theoretical bearings to make some sense of the social landscape, but in doing so we invariably find that the theories are incapable of accounting for much of what we see.

Dolnik (2013b:247-248) rightly cautions that this process can result in creating a blurred overall picture for the researcher, but argues that “quite possibly, the ‘greyness’ and ‘confusion’ of the researcher resulting from this experience simply represents an advanced level of knowledge that we should strive for.” Analytic clarity achieved through removal from reality, after all, hardly represents a virtue. It could even be argued that educating the

researcher is, in maiden attempts, the most important aspect of fieldwork, given that the concrete data any first-time field researcher can be expected to obtain is often limited and problematic. Even those who have gone on to become leading field researchers in their disciplines, such as Verdery (2018), admit to numerous errors and a process of discovery as to how to conduct genuinely useful field research in their first forays into the field.

Barriers to Accessing the Field

The first challenge encountered in conducting field research lies in accessing the geographical site of study. This proved to be a far from simple task. The North Caucasus can be considered either a conflict or a post-conflict zone, depending upon your assessment of the current security dynamics in the region. Indeed, it this conflict is the very object of study. As such, the conflict played a major role in shaping the obstacles facing efforts to conduct research.

Navigating the Ethical Approval Process

From the outset, we (myself and the supervisory team) placed ethics and recognition of the risks involved at the centre of our submission to the University's ethic committee. It was always clear to us that the security dynamics of the region would have a major influence on what it would be possible to achieve through fieldwork, and we sought to clearly present the risks and our strategies for mitigating them. However, the initial feedback provided by the ethics committee made it apparent that Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) guidelines would be afforded a defining role in the decision to allow research to proceed. For the North Caucasus in the period 2015-2018, FCO advice for the North Caucasus was "against all travel" to Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and

parts of Stavropol Kray, and “against all but essential travel” to Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachayevo-Cherkessia, and North Ossetia. The ethics committee translated this into an absolute ban on travel to the areas affected by the “against all travel” guidance, and we were forced to remove these from consideration. This confirmed the decision, outlined in chapter three, to exclude Chechnya from the analysis, but also meant that travel to two of the three republics that were included in the analysis was not possible. The absolute nature of the ban was reinforced through verbal feedback from a committee member that made it clear that any travel to these areas would result in the stripping of ESRC funding and a denial of the possibility of obtaining a PhD.

On the surface, the ethics committee’s concerns about risks were understandable and justified. Committee members cannot be expected to be experts in the areas where research is conducted, and it is entirely logical that they should defer to the authority of individuals and institutions that can be expected to possess such expertise. Moreover, FCO advisories affect the support that can be expected, both from insurance providers and from embassy authorities. Several recent high-profile incidents involving state pressure on PhD researchers have understandably increased concern among those involved in ethic committees nationwide.

The manner in which these concerns manifested themselves, however, was far from logical. FCO guidance is intended for the general public, and the challenges and risks emanating from research are likely to be considerably different from those facing tourists. Given this audience, the information contained in such guidance is often superficial, offering no greater insights than a Wikipedia article. The categorization that the FCO employs is, after all, nothing more than a crude traffic light system – suitable for its purpose, but not for academic research. Making it the sole determinant of approval

therefore makes little sense. This issue is exacerbated by a lack of consideration of the knowledge and experience of those involved in the project. The ethical approval form does not capture anything relating to the abilities or experience of the actual PGR. Directing someone who has spent eight years working professionally on the region to consult FCO guidance as a source of insights into the security situation is unhelpful at best, insulting at worst. The institution, and specifically the supervisory team, moreover, has extensive experience working with Russia, including in conducting fieldwork there. As such, the ethics' committee already had access to a much deeper pool of expertise than that represented by the FCO's guidance, but failed to take full advantage of it. Finally, it is worth considering the ethical implications of deferring to such guidance. If one of the goals of research is to challenge stereotypes and presumptions about a topic and to generate new information and understandings, then we are handicapped from the outset when those very stereotypes and presumptions determine the shape of the research that we are permitted to conduct.

The ability to mitigate these issues and alleviate the concerns of the ethics committee was limited by the peculiar – and, I would contend, unethical – way that the University of Birmingham conducts the ethical review process. Rather than the postdoctoral researcher submitting a proposal directly to the committee following consultations with the supervisory team – which, to the best of my knowledge, is standard practice at other institutions – the review is conducted as a conversation between the supervisor and the committee, with no direct engagement with the researcher. To this day, I have no idea of the composition of the panel that conducted the ethical review. This approach leaves the committee poorly placed to evaluate the researcher's awareness of the risks. It makes it harder to allay concerns or even to check the documentation that has submitted; indeed, the

entire process is marked by a lack of transparency and accountability. While this approach helps safeguard the institution by placing the burden of responsibility – and therefore culpability – onto the supervisory team, it is hard to see how this contributes to the conduct of safe research. If there are good reasons for this departure from what appears to be standard practice, I have yet to see them articulated in any documentation provided by the university.

Claims of concern for the well-being of researchers would be more credible if there was evidence of meaningful institutional support being provided. Instead, the default position appears to be to leave researchers to source their own training. Structured and affordable courses on how to conduct interviews and mitigate the risks faced in the field are extremely limited (Youngman, 2018). Indeed, it is noticeable that many of the best-practice workshops that do take place are organized by early career researchers who have been frustrated by their own experiences. I saw scant evidence of institutional memory and consistency with, or even awareness of, previous decision taken by the University's ethics committee – including approving research to the same area a mere three years previously, when the conflict risks were greater. Researchers are left to learn from trial and error, with everyone reinventing the wheel. Applied to high-risk research and conflict zones, this approach will eventually lead to researchers being killed, and it falls far short of the practices and considerations of duty of care displayed by other organizations working in similar environments (Youngman, 2018).

Finally, some of the actions of the ethics committee increased rather mitigated risks, and demonstrated a lack of practical experience of fieldwork, at least in comparable circumstances. Asking how many checkpoints the researcher will need to pass through may appear reasonable in the abstract, but, prior to accessing the field, it is as unanswerable (and

ultimately as illuminating) as asking someone how many traffic lights they will pass through on their way to work. Were this a serious concern, then requiring the researcher, as the ethics committee did, to be based outside the area of study and commute for two hours to interviews actually increases the exposure to them – and, as anyone who has ever witnessed driving in the North Caucasus can testify, increasing commuting time carries its own risks. On the other hand, requiring researchers to fill out a health and safety form stipulating how they will mitigate fundamentally uncontrollable risks like local traffic conditions is as absurd as asking how they will manage questionable local culinary practices. Advocating using local partnerships is a great strategy where those networks are available, but – as in this instance – where they are not, a considerable part of the fieldwork process involves establishing those networks. Stipulating their use cannot therefore be a prerequisite for the granting of ethical approval. Finally, and most damningly, the entire process lasted 403 days (hopefully a record), even though the initial submission to the committee was already highly constrained in its goals. One of the primary reasons for this delay was a risk-averse institutional culture, with discussions bounced between different groups (ethics, health and safety, heads of department) because no one was willing to take responsibility for actually making a decision. Such decisions as were made were always done at the last minute, immediately before the stipulated window in which fieldwork was to be conducted. This meant that planning also had to be last minute, again unnecessarily increasing both risks and costs.

Challenges in the Field

Administrative and Other Obstacles

The Russian state possesses various mechanisms for constraining access to areas, many of which are much more subtle than the open harassment experienced by some field researchers (Moore, 2013). One is the invitation and visa application process. Although the North Caucasus is officially part of Russia, administratively it is not treated as such. Organizations providing visa support are frequently reluctant to support travel to the region, a problem I encountered on several occasions. For example, a subsequent field visit to Kabardino-Balkaria had to be cancelled because the host institution in Moscow had received some form of rebuke for my first research trip to the region and therefore announced it would be unable to support future visits. Since the first trip had involved establishing links with local partners and developing a plan of action for a subsequent trip, significant opportunities were lost as a result.

Another control mechanism is the process of registration. Under Russian law, visitors are required to register with the authorities if they are in a location for more than seven days. Only the inviting organization or the owner of the accommodation where the visitor is staying can submit the necessary documentation; visitors cannot register themselves. As my inviting organizations were always based outside the planned field sites, they were unable to provide this support. Many people – and all of those I contacted – who rent private accommodation are unwilling to support registration. Consequently, it became necessary to stay in a hotel for the entire duration of my visits. This significantly increased the costs of the research stays, curtailing the amount of time that I could spend in the field.

The Role of Luck

A final issue affecting access was the challenge of identifying people willing to participate in the research. The North Caucasus can be classified as a “hostile research environment,” in which the population,

isn’t simply indifferent, uninformed or susceptible to being upset by certain questions or poor technique. It does not want research done, and if research nevertheless takes place it seeks to control the research and the researcher (Fielding, 2004:249).

Trust levels are low in the region, creating challenges for an interview selection strategy reliant on a snow-balling technique. Gatekeepers can play a key role in introducing researchers to interviewees and vouching for them (Kenney, 2013:30), but finding such gatekeepers is a formidable task, particularly when access to the field is restricted. This is even truer when pre-existing support networks are unavailable. Research opportunities are arguably more dependent on luck and fortuitous encounter with the right individuals than on judgement. A considerable amount of the time in the field was spent in constructing support networks, and several opportunities were left unexplored as a result of the travel restrictions imposed on me by the university. Further difficulties arose from the sensitive nature of the topic, which heightens rather than alleviates mistrust. Several interviewees commented on how the environment had changed as a result of the Sochi Olympics-related crackdown, and therefore they themselves found it impossible to replicate previous work with Salafi communities. It quickly became clear that it would be impossible at the given time to access either members or former members of the insurgency. This impossibility of gaining access to members of the insurgency prevents directly addressing a critical problem in the study of ideology and communication strategies, namely that the audience is always

missing. The cumulative effects of access difficulties determined the choice of interview subject and the relatively constrained place of such interviews within the research.

Conducting Ethical Research

In conducting interviews, ethical concerns were paramount, and there was a clear need to avoid endangering the security of interviewees: while the researcher may be able to leave the conflict zone, the subjects of that research are not and may face risks from speaking to the researcher (Moore, 2013:136; Ranstorp, 2013:48). Part of the concerns related to securing data. To protect sources, interviews were fully anonymized and, having been recorded either through a dictaphone or notes, uploaded to a computer, encrypted and immediately transferred via relay that ensured I was only ever in possession of and able to access a small quantity of data at any one time. Of course, data was still vulnerable in transition from interview site to transcription and encryption, but these risks were deemed unavoidable and ethical concerns were mitigated by the fact that I was only interviewing people engaged in public activities who were already known to the authorities and was concerned precisely with those public activities. Moreover, it is presumed that people operating in a conflict zone and engaged in politicized activities are likely to be equally, if not more, aware of the dangers posed by participation in research (Dolnik, 2013b:230). Measures were thus designed to avoid creating unnecessary additional risks. In this vein, signed consent was not sought, on the grounds that this increases risks to participants and researchers, both of whom are consequently unable to deny contact and become easily identifiable (Dolnik, 2013a). While the logic of written consent is understandable, it is heavily rooted in Western culture and fails to appreciate the difference between low-context societies, where trust is established through contracts, documents, and rules, and high-

context ones, where it is established through verbal agreements and relationships (on which, see Norman, 2009:71). It is certainly of questionable ethical validity in societies with a history of repressive security service practices. At the same time, some form of informed consent is both an ethical necessity and can help clarify misunderstandings and defuse volatile encounters (Kenney, 2013:141). Thus, following the approach of Ranstorp (2013:54), I carried a written statement describing the research goals and participant rights, printed on institution-letterheaded paper, in both English and Russian, and interviewees were offered a copy and briefed on its contents at the start of interviews.

The Benefits of Failure

This appendix has highlighted some of the key difficulties I encountered in conducting field research, and there were many more that I have not mentioned here. One may reasonably therefore question whether the efforts were worth it. I would contend that they were. First, the only way of knowing boundaries is by testing them, and constraints and opportunities may not be consistent across or even within institutions. Had the exact same procedures been followed three years previously, it is likely, given the changed environment mentioned by interviewees, that field visits may have been more fruitful. The same may be true three years from now. Indeed, the failure to obtain access and therefore data is a data point in and of itself. Second, the process of conducting fieldwork and the interviews themselves furnished numerous insights, far more than have been included in this dissertation. Some of these may be incorporated into future research projects – I have, for example, accumulated a wealth of information on the rehabilitation commissions that could not be accommodated here because of the limited role played by human rights actors in them. Other insights have significantly advanced my understanding of particular

processes in the North Caucasus. In other words, the research fully confirmed the assumptions about the role of field research in educating the researcher, beyond the production of specific data. Finally, fieldwork involved the construction of support networks. Now that these are in place, I am in a far better position when it comes to conducting future research in the region. Indeed, this was one of the goals set at the outset: laying the groundwork for future work. As such, fieldwork was hugely beneficial even absent vast amounts of data specific to the particular research question.

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